

The Garden

that

I Love



By
Alfred
Austin



Charles Henry Edward Fortnum

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The garden that I love,



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THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE

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GARDEN THAT I LOVE

BY
ALFRED AUSTIN
POET LAUREATE

*Vola con gli occhi per questo giardino,
Chè veder lui t' accenderà lo sguardo
Più a montar per lo raggio divino.*

DANTE, *Divina Commedia*, Par. C. xxxi. vv. 97-99

*Retir'd Leisure,
That in trim gardens takes his pleasure.*

MILTON, *Il Penseroso*

SIXTH THOUSAND

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TO

MADELEINE & DOROTHY STANLEY

Dear Madeleine and Dorothy,

Do you remember how, when first you saw the Garden that I Love, inexorable clouds, as though of opinion your presence was sunshine enough, came drifting from the south, and fitful showers drenched border and flower-bed? But young enthusiasm, and in part perhaps inherited amiability, allowed you to see nothing save unqualified beauty, and even on that morose forenoon you bestowed on them panegyrics they hardly deserve even in their most unclouded moments.

After you were both gone, I said to myself, 'Some day they will have a garden of their own, and they too will love it.' But what is Love? Love, says Veronica's Poet somewhere,

*Is observation, patience, vigilance,
And heartfelt understanding. Love is wisdom
In tender operation.*

But it is neither wise, nor tender, nor loving, to remit to others, however expert, the supreme care of one's garden. You will tend yours with your own hands, and discover its needs with your own heart; and if, in doing so, you have to withdraw yourselves sometimes, more than accords with modern wont, into rural seclusion, your social instincts will

not thereby be starved, nor your share in the graces and charities of life thereby be curtailed. You will find much resemblance between flowers and human beings; for they too grow reserved under coldness or maltreatment, and respond with almost feminine alacrity to every sympathetic endeavour to apprehend them. But, most of all, the cultivation of a garden tends to foster that sense of kinship with the lowly in which you have been trained; since there are none who love their garden so tenderly as the poor. Is it not a consoling thought that what, after human affection, is, I think, the deepest and most abiding of all pleasures, is well within the reach of the humblest cottager? Only yesterday I saw, in a little village garden, a cluster of Crown Imperials that put to shame the best I can boast; and I know full well their higher beauty was but the stalk and blossom of deeper devotion.

You therefore, I know, will tend your own flowers, even as already, in some degree, you tend them at your dear Arlington; bestowing them on your friends, with them decorating the Sanctuary, and oftentimes carrying them—‘lilies, lilies bearing’—to the window-sills of the suffering and the pallets of the poor. That is why, more even than for the friendship you and yours have shown me, I ask you to accept the dedication of this little volume.

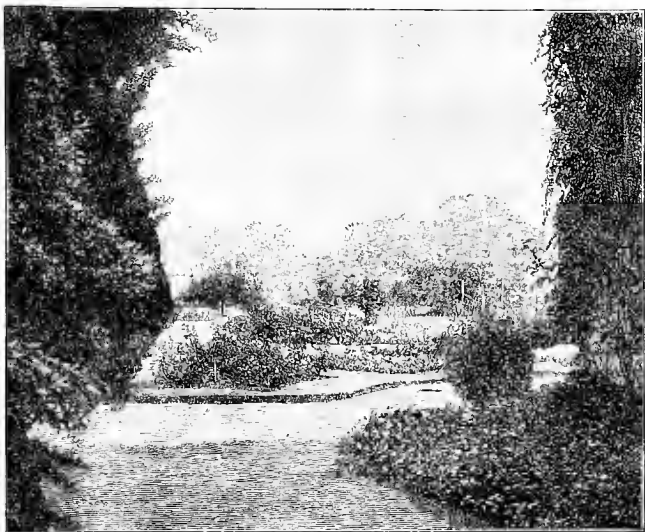
Believe me always,

Yours affectionately,

ALFRED AUSTIN.

Swinford Old Manor,

Mayday, 1894.



THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE

April 30th.

‘I COULD *live* in it,’ he said.

It was a little plot of ground, some fifteen feet square, abutting on the high-road, one of a succession of cottage-gardens, all of them of pretty much the same size, but each having a representative character of its own, and better or worse cultivated, more or less affectionately tended, according to the disposition, taste, and energy of the owner. This one was very formal,—but, indeed, from the

narrowness of their territory, they necessarily all had that characteristic,—but noticeably neat and lovingly ordered. Its main ornament was a giant *Echeveria*, which drew my attention, certainly not by reason of its loveliness, but rather by the heartiness of its growth, somewhat surprising in a comparatively tender species exposed to all the chances of the year. Round it, at carefully-calculated distances, were geraniums, calceolarias, ageratums, some ten-week stocks,—everything, in fact, that you have a right to look for in a highly-respectable enclosure. The man I had addressed was a mechanic, employed in some neighbouring railway works, and he evidently treated his spruce little plot like a machine, which ought never to be out of gear. He had cast aside the dress of his daily occupation, smartened himself up, and put on his best attire, as he always did when about to work among his flowers—as though the tidiness he exacted from them reacted on himself, and compelled him, in turn, to be spick-and-span when in their superior company. I had stopped to compliment him on the assiduity with which he cultivated his bit of ground, and for friendliness' sake observed that he must indeed be fond of it. Then came the emphatic answer—

‘I could *live* in it.’

I suppose I smiled ; for a whole life passed on a piece of earth fifteen feet square, part of which is dedicated to a gravel path, seems a somewhat narrow existence. But, after all, what is narrow? The Garden that I Love is, I allow, a trifle larger than that ; but to the owner of Wilton or Albury I imagine it would appear pitifully small. Withal, not only could I spend all my days in it, but, as a fact, I do so ; and the only complaint I ever have to make concerning it is when weeds grow apace or shrubberies become unconscionably untidy ; and then I blame myself, and say to Veronica, who has often warned me against what she calls my mania for expansion, that I fear it is too large. Gentle as she always is with me, she cannot resist quoting my tardy testimony to the fulfilment of her own predictions. A wise man never says *Meâ culpâ* to a woman. But then I have no pretensions to be wise, save in love for my garden and for Veronica.

‘I know you will be pleased Lamia and the Poet can both come ; and it is so nice to think that, this time, we shall have them all to ourselves.’

She had her hand on the green ivory knob of the old Sheffield silver-plated urn, ready to turn it back as soon as the teapot was duly filled. The

urn was one of her 'things' my sister valued most in the world, partly because, as I cannot deny, its form was admirably classical, which is only another word for shapely and harmoniously proportioned, but still more because she had got it a bargain in a country town not yet awake to the money value of what our grandmothers laid aside as done with, or parted with as out of date. I remember when she first brought it home, showing it to me with an air of triumph, and evidently expecting from me that instant and copious sympathy which every good woman demands from male ignorance for her purchases, I thought it one of the most worthless pieces of old rubbish I had ever looked on. I did not say so, you may be quite sure; on the contrary, I was quite magnificently mendacious, employing for the purpose the most colossal adjectives of conventional admiration I could summon to my lips. It is only fair to say that when I bring home some new campanula, looking exceedingly scrubby and more like a small wisp of withered grass than a live plant, Veronica behaves with the same sympathetic insincerity, and lavishes on my trumpery *trouvaille* epithets that would better become a new orchid from the upper reaches of the Amazon or the jungles of Madagascar.

‘Guess what I gave for it,’ she said.

To be honest, I would not, in my then state of mind, have given half-a-crown for it. At a shot, I said—

‘Perhaps eighteen shillings.’

‘Fifteen!’ she answered, with a glow of financial triumph. She had it plated again, and, I fancy, it now stands her in about six guineas ; and any guest who fails, before going away, to notice this urn and comment on its matchless beauty, is mentally set down by its owner as a person not only destitute of taste, but as deficient in good breeding, and even lacking in the cardinal virtues. Such an offender is never invited again, except at my special instance ; and, though the slight to the urn is never alluded to,—Veronica is much too feminine a diplomatist for that,—my proposal is invariably received with coldness, and is not conceded until the moral qualities of the person in question have been tacitly depreciated between us. Women rarely, if ever, commit this particular form of offence ; but most men, it must be owned, are so stupid, that they are quite capable of seeing tea made out of an urn big enough and beautiful enough to contain all the ashes of all the Great without making an observation. To the more crass of our male guests I

generally contrive to give a seasonable hint on the subject; and if it be a man I like very much and wish to see abiding in Veronica's good graces, I take care, on Monday morning, to whisper to him just before breakfast—

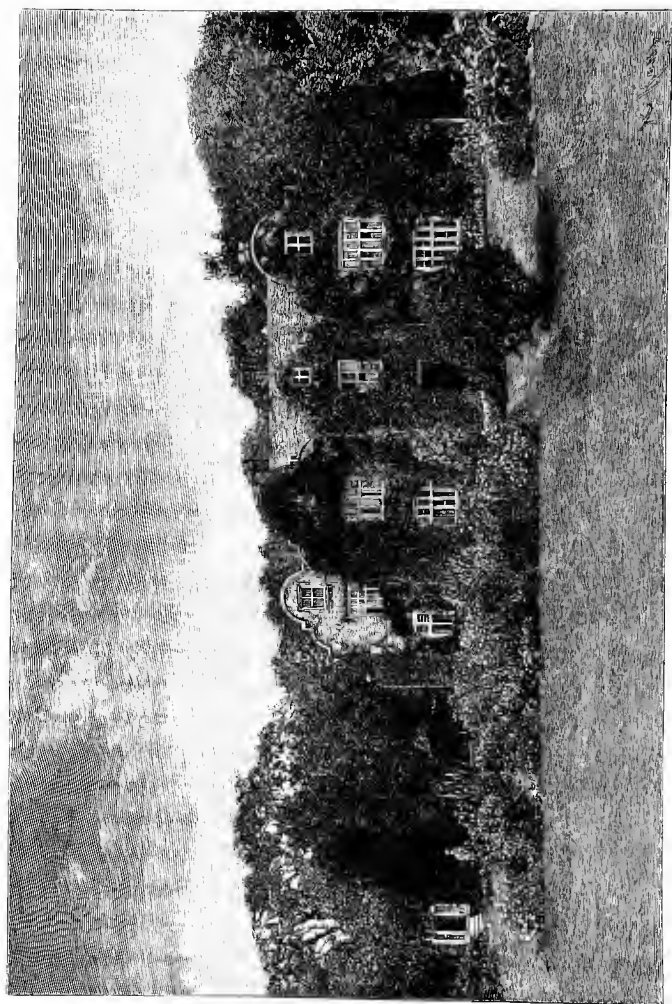
‘I say, old fellow, don't forget the urn.’

One friend of mine—I need scarcely say he was an Irishman—acted so extravagantly on the hint, and expatiated with so much unction on the urn, and more particularly on what he called the ‘Hellenic fascination of its form,’ though in truth he does not know an oval from a rhomboid, that I have often suspected Veronica, apparently confirmed celibate though she seems, keeps a soft corner in her heart for that arrant impostor.

The concentration of Veronica's attention on the breakfast-table did not prevent her from extending to me her sisterly cheek. I always salute her thus when we meet in the morning. She always salutes me before we part for the night. I imagine the former is a tribute from me to her evident superiority in being abroad the first, and the latter a tribute from her to me in token of my manly capacity for sitting up to any hour over Gerarde's *Herball*, of which a copy, of the delightful edition of 1636, has just been given me by a neighbouring vicar

and valued friend, who, like Catiline, but in a more honourable sense, is *sui profusus*. I am quite of Veronica's opinion that this little domestic ceremony should never be pretermitted, being a sort of morning and evening prayer that sweetens and sanctifies a household. I am aware the habit is somewhat out of fashion, like good manners generally, in these indifferent what-does-it-matter days. But I am sure, were I to neglect it for a single morning, Veronica would be as much astonished as if the room had not been dusted, or if the water refused to boil.

Whenever we are expecting a male guest in whom Veronica is particularly interested, it is invariably assumed that he is invited for my gratification ; and when, on the other hand, we are to be paid an angel's visit by some creature too divinely good for human nature's daily food, then of course it is as Veronica's friend that she is asked. Thus we pay due deference to the proprieties without foregoing our little preferences. Of my admiration of Lamia I make no secret. No man could be hypocrite enough for that, seeing that she is visibly and absolutely admirable. But I cannot get Veronica to allow that she herself has more than a purely literary interest in the Poet. Every well-



constituted young lady has in these days her favourite poet ; and the person we call '*the Poet*' is Veronica's. She pretends to think Lamia and the Poet would be very happy together, which is manifestly absurd. But the theory assists her to invite him pretty often, and to maintain on her own part the theory of sympathetic indifference to which I have alluded.

'I don't think,' observed Veronica, 'I ever saw the garden looking better at this time of year ; and, by Saturday, it will be brighter and gayer still.'

What Veronica wants indoors that she has not already got, I cannot yet surmise ; but I know that pretty speeches of this kind addressed to my notoriously tenderest point will have to be paid for sooner or later. I wonder if she has seen another urn at the old curiosity shop in our nearest town.

But what she says about the garden is perfectly true. To-morrow will be May-day ; and though I read in the newspapers that the loveliness of May is a conventional fiction on the part of hyperborean bards with passages of Theocritus running in their heads, never either in Italy or in Greece did I see such tulips, such turf, such a wealth of bloom in shrubbery and orchard, as at this moment are sunning themselves in the Garden that I Love. It

is with me a cardinal dogma that a garden, truly to deserve the name, must abound in flowers, and not in one nook or corner, but everywhere, from, at least, the day of All Fools to the day of All Saints. If any one will start a gardening competition on that basis I am prepared to enter for the prize. But why should I try to grow the largest and most shapely rose that ever was seen, for a particular day, to the sacrifice of all the other buds, or degrade a many-branching apple-tree into a dwarf cordon, in order to have one Warner's King or a single Peasgood Nonsuch large enough to make a dumpling for a Cyclops? No, I say; let the judges come round one day in every week, and give marks on each occasion to the various competitors, add them up on the 1st of November, and then adjudge the prize.

Over and over again people have said to me, 'What a trouble your Spring gardening must be to you!' Others exclaim, 'And what an expense!' It is neither one nor the other. It is the simplest and cheapest thing in the world, when one has once mastered it, and then one feels so ashamed of oneself for not having mastered it before. I had to endure many gentle doubts from Veronica upon this score during my apprenticeship; and, indeed; one may

say, to the very end, of gardeners as Napoleon said of generals, that those are the best who make the fewest mistakes. For gardening is a partnership in which Nature, the senior partner, exercises the principal authority. It is only fair that she should, for hers is the main portion of the capital, and she admits you into the business only because, while a clerk in her service, you displayed a certain amount of skill and a good deal of assiduity. Senior partners of long standing are said to be rather queer and crusty at times, and by virtue of their longer experience do what seem to the juniors the oddest things; and I will not deny that Nature is occasionally rather short in her temper, especially in Spring, when her stock-in-trade is subject to daily fluctuations. But if you only have the good sense to humour the uncertainty of Nature, it all comes right, if not to a day, much less to an hour, in the long run.

The Springtime will not come to date;
Cloud, wind, and frost Man's reckoning mar.
For bud and bloom you have to wait,
Despite your ordered Calendar.

If Nature worked by rule and square,
Than Man what wiser would she be?
What wins us is her careless care,
And true unpunctuality.

Thus, speaking with a certain generous absence of precision, one may safely affirm that a well-conceived Spring garden should be looking its very best some time about the first week in May. This year the calculation will be fulfilled to a nicety. The big dense bushes of the small-leaved berberis, thick as a quickset hedge but not trimmed like it, and neither brushed nor topped, are in the full glory of their golden flower, and spread round about them a rich Persian carpet of superfluous pollen. The industrious bees, clad in work-day velveteen, make profitable music in them all day long. The double gorse, whose fault is to flower itself to death, is a lowlier but withal not an unworthy rival of the berberis; and the broom, here yellow, there white, is furnishing itself to its fingertips. In the mixed beds and borders the fritillaries and Crown Imperials are in their heyday, the jonquils are sweeter than any honey, the grape-hyacinths are as stiff and unconcerned as usual; and, while the old-fashioned double daffodils have faded from grass and thicket, the later and more elaborate narcissus are still pluming themselves on their cuffs, and collars, and dainty petticoats. The hepaticas, whether blue or scarlet, fagged by the sun, are fast following the vanished crocuses; but

oxslip and polyanthus, where they enjoy a little shelter, still hold bravely out. This morning I saw a *Tiarella*, or *Foam Flower*, making a very respectable show, though I can see I have made a mistake in planting it where it stands. It is too much exposed to the mid-day sun, and has hardly sufficient moisture about its roots. Next year it shall be better treated. For there is no gardening without humility, an assiduous willingness to learn, and a cheerful readiness to confess you were mistaken. Nature is continually sending even its oldest scholars to the bottom of the class for some egregious blunder. But, by the due exercise of patience and diligence, they may work their way to the top again.

But, indeed, were it not for one's mistakes, one's failures, and one's disappointments, the love one bears one's garden would soon perish for lack of sustenance. Just as you may admire but can scarcely feel tenderly towards uniformly successful people, so for a garden that was always and everywhere equally gaudy or equally green you might entertain wonder, but you would hardly cherish affection. It is one's failures in life that make one gentle and forgiving with oneself; and I almost think it is the failures of others that mostly endear

them to us. The Garden that I Love is very perverse, very incalculable in its ways—falling at times as much below expectation as at others exceeding it. They who have no patience with accident, with waywardness, should not attempt to garden. Every gardener is, like Dogberry, ‘a fellow that hath had losses.’ There are some gardeners, I am aware, who have nothing but losses, and who resign themselves with provoking equanimity to these, more especially if they be gardening for others, and are paid for doing so. These garden stoics should be pitilessly avoided or dismissed. But a fair percentage of things *will* ‘go home’; and the pathetic sum of mortality demands its contribution from tree, shrub, and flower. A gardener of the old-fashioned sort never expresses, nor indeed feels, the faintest surprise when plants fall into consumption and slowly fade away. Do not his own daughters, and the daughters of his neighbours, sometimes do the same? He regards casual losses in border and shrubbery as part of the General Dispensation, which the parson assures him is ‘all right.’ Still this attitude of passive submission to the inevitable may be carried too far; and it is well, having found out the conditions of a plant’s existence, to try to

keep it alive as long as possible. Not but that, occasionally, one may without blame insist on a plant doing less well in a less favourable position. The most beautiful garden—I do not mean the plot of ground with the most perfectly developed flowers—will have the greatest number of losses by reason of certain severe and merciless conditions under which its beauty has to be maintained. An unbeautiful garden is a garden in which man's artificial selection reigns and rules supreme. In a beautiful garden man tempers the hard-and-fast lines of artificial selection by leaving something to natural selection, permitting within due bounds the struggle for existence, and not bewailing overmuch the non-survival of the unfittest.

There is one season of the year in which, over a considerable area of the garden, chance and vicissitude are excluded, and in which there never are any losses to record. The area is that which I fancy Veronica had in her mind when she was good enough to say this morning she never saw it looking better or brighter. I will not deny that there is a certain formality in Veronica's taste, in some degree, no doubt, the accident of disposition, but in some measure, I sometimes suspect, the result of the scrupulous care with which she orders

and contrives the interior of our home. It is well understood that everything domestic or within-doors she rules without partner or challenge, and that everything forensic, or out-of-doors, falls under my exclusive sway. I daresay I do not always confine myself to my own territory ; but if I make a suggestion beyond it, and Veronica does not accept it, *cadit quæstio*, and I say nothing more. I think women are more aggressive than men, though in a quiet, insidious, and unobtrusively pertinacious way. Veronica trespasses on my domain much oftener than I trespass on hers. This, however, by the way. She is so masterly in her household, that a man would have to be a presumptuous ignoramus to question her supremacy in that important realm. But the tidiness, the neatness, the shapeliness, she there maintains lead her unconsciously, I think, to look for them out-of-doors also. Accordingly, she never says such agreeable things about the Garden that I Love as she does when the beds are all full of Spring-flowering bulbs, each in its proper place, and each a picture of method, order, and symmetry. For tulips will always wear a certain indoor, drawing-room look, do what you will with them. Each bulb has got to grow one particular flower,

in one particular way ; and, in so far as it deviates from the law of the Medes and Persians appertaining to tulips, it is a failure. Accordingly, I have never been able to reconcile myself to beds of closely-planted tulips, with nothing to mitigate or relieve their eighteenth-century correctness. Indeed, they are much less formal and more satisfactory when cut and taken into the house ; for then, if put into properly-shaped glasses, they assume a languid air, as though their beautiful heads were too heavy for their fragile stems, make graceful curves, and take on a drooping attitude almost pathetic. Unsevered from the hidden bulb they stand bolt upright, and are in masses more like squares of infantry than peaceful tenants of the parterre. But carpet the bed in which you plant them with *Forget-me-not*, and the green leaves and delicate cerulean flowers of the *myosotis* form an atmosphere of casual carelessness that communicates itself to the tulip stalks and flower cups soaring amongst them.

I have long since convinced Veronica, who loves to find me out in some supposed act of extravagance out-of-doors, in order, I suppose, to parry or avert what she considers my occasional tendency to reprove her for excessive expenditure within, that

Spring gardening is a very inexpensive diversion. I do not think, were I to show her my gardening bills,—which, however, I take good care never to do,—that she could tax me with an outlay on fresh tulips of more than five pounds during the last five years. The account for lilies, narcissus, *Scilla sibirica*, *Chionodoxa Luciliæ*, and out-door cyclamens, would, I allow, tell a different tale, for I lose a good many of these every year. But one's tulips are a possession for ever, if one only goes the right way about preserving them. It is simplicity itself. When about the third week in May they have to be dug up, I lay them in 'by the heels,' as gardeners say, in soil resembling that in which they have been flowering. There they remain till their leaves are fully withered, and then they are taken up and placed in sand in spare wooden boxes. Some time in August I look them over, take off any dead leaves or coating that may yet be clinging to them, and place them on trays in the sun, so as to make quite sure they are dry. But you must not keep them there too long. Then all of them that are not rejected by reason of imperfection or insufficiency of weight are stored in brown-paper bags, and there stay till they are wanted again in November, to be committed afresh to the open

beds, with a small handful of sand round them, to preserve them from the peril of excessive moisture. I often think what a comfortable time they have of it during the cold winter days and long winter nights, snugly housed underground, hybernating and fast asleep, yet dreaming all the while of the Spring, of March sunshine, April rain, and May music, and slowly and unseen moving towards their liberation from subterranean slumber. Under the warm blanket of the snow they are breathing the whole time, stirred by that internal motion, which, at the allotted hour, will produce what we call their awakening.

You may think I am easily pleased ; but, day after day, in March, and indeed several times a day, I pass many happy moments in stooping over the beds, and looking with eager gaze for the first indications of their coming through the ground. Should they be later than usual in pushing their little green cones through the earth, I softly move the covering from some of them, then put it back again carefully when I have satisfied myself that they are there, and only waiting for a little more sunshine to say good-morrow to the Spring. How delicately and with what infinite tact they lend themselves to every mood of that fascinating but

fitful season ! Let the sun but shine fully and frankly, and, when once they are well above ground,



they will open their hearts to it with quick and sensitive response, as though they could neither love nor be loved by it too much. When the heavens wax morose and the sky turns lack-lustre, then slowly, quietly, and showing no offence, but as if conscious that love and open-heartedness are things too good and precious to be wasted, they close their transparent chalices ; sometimes, as they do so, imprisoning some sedulous bee that was too

intent on his honeyed labours to notice that the enchanted palace in which he was working was being gradually transformed into a cruel fortress without exit. One by one, when comes the appointed hour, they let fall their still beautifully-tinted petals, and once more withdraw their thoughts underground. I have to confess that hitherto I have neglected to make proper use of the late-flowering, old-fashioned English tulips, to which fine names are now being given whereof we can well afford to be ignorant. But I will correct that fault, and must, moreover, give the parrot tulips another chance, planting them nearer to each other and in poorish soil, so to prevent them from growing too tall and compelling one to stake them, to the loss of more than half their beauty. They must be grown in groups; just as the English tulips, which, though the tallest of all, are strong enough, as everything English should be, to carry their heads without any support, produce the best effect when planted singly.

The Forget-me-not gives even less trouble than the tulips, which it beautifies. I do not remember where my first stock came from, but you can always raise any quantity you may desire by sowing the seed in the open air in June, pricking off the young

plants in August, and finally putting them in their allotted beds some time in November. After that, if you lay them in 'by the heels,' when lifted in May, they will ripen their seed there, and scatter it, and you will find in August that your stock of growing plants for the ensuing season is far in excess of your needs. Once learn how Nature gardens for herself, and you will be able to spare yourself a good deal of trouble.

Veronica remarked to me, a day or two ago, that my favourite phrase is somewhat inappropriate; and when I asked her why, she quoted from *The Gardener's Daughter* the lines—

Not wholly in the busy world, nor quite
Beyond it, blooms the garden that I love.

What an insidious way with it has beautiful verse, creeping without effort, and without observation on one's part, into one's heart, and dwelling in our memory, like some fair, winsome, indispensable child. Of course I have for years known *The Gardener's Daughter*, yet I was unaware, till accurate Veronica reminded me, that the phrase 'The Garden that I Love' is thus to be found there.

If, in order to love one's garden, it were necessary that it should not be quite beyond the living

world, I fear that mine would never have so completely absorbed my affections. Tacitus, in his *De Moribus et Populis Germaniæ*, observes of our Saxon ancestors, 'Colunt discreti ac digressi, ut fons, ut campus, ut nemus placuit. *Vicos locant, non in nostrum morem, connexis et cohærentibus ædificiis: suam quisque domum spatio circumdat.*' The 'space' that I described myself as desiring around my 'home,' when I finally decided that with the busy world I had no more business, was declared by Veronica to be greatly in excess of anything I should be able to discover within the limit of my exceedingly moderate income; and for a time it looked as though she would prove an only too true prophetess. I have had but one experience of the kind, but I should think one meets with more disappointments, vexations, and disillusiones in searching for such a home in the country than in any other pursuit in life. It is so easy to beguile people into long journeys by descriptions that have no relation whatever to the thing described. As a rule, the places I was induced to look at were pronounced impossible at a glance, either by reason of their inherent ugliness and the vulgarity of their architecture, being grotesque or meaningless, of the badness of the

situation, of the unattractive nature of the country in which they stood, or by the too close proximity of other dwellings. I knew exactly what I wanted. I was looking for charm, solitude, and some antiquity; and these in conjunction Veronica said I should never get.

I had reached a stage of extreme despondency when Veronica said, 'Why not go and see this one?' indicating a number and description in the catalogue of a well-known house-agent.

'Because,' I answered, 'the description is so uninviting, and, as you surely see, the rent is too low for it to have attractiveness of any kind. However, I will go and see it to-morrow.'

To-morrow came, and I went, taking a journey of some sixty miles from town. It was a lovely August day; but I suppose I was out of humour in consequence of a succession of disappointments, and in that state of heart which is produced by hope deferred; so that when, on reaching the end of my journey, I was unable to obtain a conveyance of any sort, by reason of some high ecclesiastic function which had set the little town agog, I half made up my mind to return to London by the next train, without troubling myself to inspect one fraud more. But, just as I was about to reach this

conclusion, a genial though suspiciously rubicund outside porter accosted me.

‘It is under three miles, sir,’ he said, ‘and a very pretty walk ; and, if you like, I will show you the way.’

‘Very well,’ I answered. And we started.

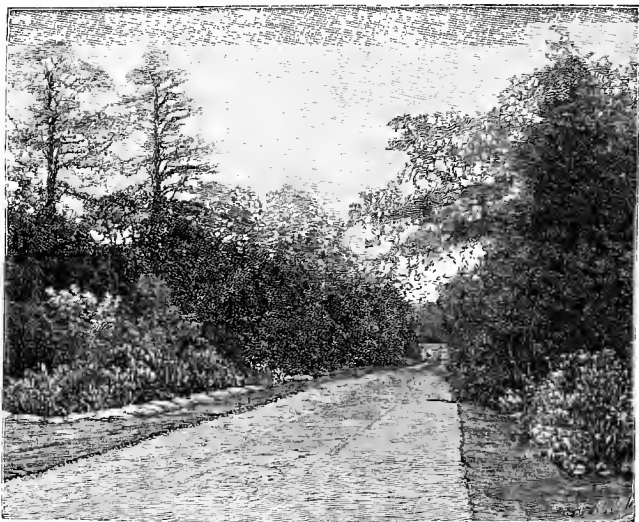
The first mile of the road was blameless, but unremarkable, and I was just beginning to think my guide had as little conscience as a London house-agent, when we passed through an unpretentious gate, and were in an old elm avenue, undeniably picturesque, and doubly welcome by reason of its shade, but the growth of whose trees had been stunted by irreparable neglect. Shortly their umbrageous branches came to an end, and we were in a park, indifferently cared for according to modern ideas, but stocked with timber of magnificent growth and of every known native variety. Perhaps the oaks domineered in majesty, but they had worthy companions in both towering and branching elms ; in dense and expansive sycamores, each of which occupied a vast territory to itself ; in tall, soaring ash-trunks, that take such pride in their boles that they never conceal them with leaves ; in horse-chestnuts, covered with their prickly fruit ; and, here and there, in Spanish

chestnuts, the finest I have ever seen in England, and still more colossal specimens of which were congregated, as I now am better aware, on a wooded eminence my companion told me I must learn, if I ever came to settle in that country, to designate a toll. Here and there a stately walnut spread out its shining leaves, a handful of which I could not resist plucking and bruising, so pleasant to me is their aromatic scent ; and they, too, gave evidence of a copious harvest. If there be a woodreeve of this well-timbered domain, he must be, I thought to myself, a good old Tory indeed, who does not allow trunk to be axed or bough to be lopped. Neglect is very picturesque in its effects, whether the thing neglected be a ruined castle, an unkempt peasant, or a secular woodland chase. I felt that, had Veronica been with me, she would have observed that this park was very ill maintained, and that she would dearly love to have the thinning and regulating of its trees. To my less orderly imagination it presented a most agreeable appearance ; and what, perhaps, put the finishing touch to my satisfaction was the exceeding number of hawthorns, most of them in the perfect maturity of their growth. Whilst I was being thrown into this sympathetic state of mind, my companion suddenly

called my attention to a goodly Jacobean mansion of red brick standing in the lower ground of the park, and looking as though it had been there from all time worth thinking of. Shakespeare must have been alive when it was built, and Cecil, and Drake, and Sir Walter Raleigh, and many another famous Englishman whose name we love to hear because he glorified and exalted our race by what he said or did. At any rate, I mused to myself, the immediate approach to this so-called manor-house is altogether after my heart.

I had scarcely made this consoling reflection when we came upon another gate, passed out of the park, and found ourselves in an ordinary meadow, through which, however, the park-road still travelled in a pleasing curve. It looked tame and characterless after the undulating sylvan spaces I had just traversed, and my heart began once again to sink within me, when we came to yet another gate that led into an apple orchard laden with fruit of every sort and colour, the trees being some seventy or eighty years of age. The only thing that invaded the uniformity of their straight and goodly rows was an oak of giant girth and splendidly-spreading branches, so thick with leaves that it was not till we were clear of them that, though it stood not

more than fifty yards ahead of me, I perceived the house I had in desperation come to scrutinise. Even at that instant, and before I had looked on more than its gray stone frontage, almost smothered in creepers up to the very top of its three rounded



gables, I recognised the haven of my hopes, and the fulfilment, despite Veronica's gloomy predictions, of my most fastidious dreams. It was small ; it was secluded ; its position was, according to my taste, perfect ; and it had the blended charm of simple harmonious form and venerable age.

Garden, I could see, there was none, save a narrow strip of ground separated from the orchard by a wire fence, half of which was sward, and the other half dedicated to potatoes and gooseberry-bushes. A short, bent, bare-headed old man was mowing the lawn, if lawn I am to call it, with a scythe, and might, with the implement he lifted at my approach, have stood for Old Father Time himself.

I had quite made up my mind that, let the interior of the house be what it might, there would I live, and there, if allowed, would die. I was prepared, therefore, for mouldy passages, for rooms of impossible shape and dimension, for tumble-down staircases, and for pitiful accommodation everywhere; and I was already rehearsing the controversy I should have to conduct with Veronica on this thorny question. But, in company with Father Time and his wife, who had now joined us, and who, with the exception of her raiment, seemed the very double of himself, in hue, age, manner, and toothless speech, I found myself, to my astonishment, passing through the various parts of a dwelling in excellent condition, cased in exceptionally stout walls, and showing nowhere sign either of damp or decay. The hall was little more than a passage; but there was a savour of

antique taste in its dark-stained oaken staircase and in its three ancient doorways (through one of which there was access to the offices, while the other two opened on dining-room and drawing-room respectively), which gave it an aspect of dignity too often wanting in halls of much larger dimensions. An old cottage clock ticked slowly and solemnly in the dining-room, its deliberate measurement of time sounding all the louder because it was the only piece of furniture in a room whose boards, too, were bare. Old Mistress Time had one cardinal virtue at least: she loved cleanliness, and there was no corner where one could not have sat down to a hearty meal with unconcerned appetite. Over the dining-room and drawing-room were two other rooms, resembling them in size and character, and possessing an unusual aspect of cheerfulness, notwithstanding their heavy mullioned windows, by reason of the cross-light which they enjoyed. I observed with satisfaction that the house looked almost exactly south-east, to my thinking the proper aspect for an English country-house. Such an aspect ensures morning cheerfulness all the year round, the full advantage of whatever sun there is in winter from dawn practically to sundown, and the exquisite effects of the rising of the moon.

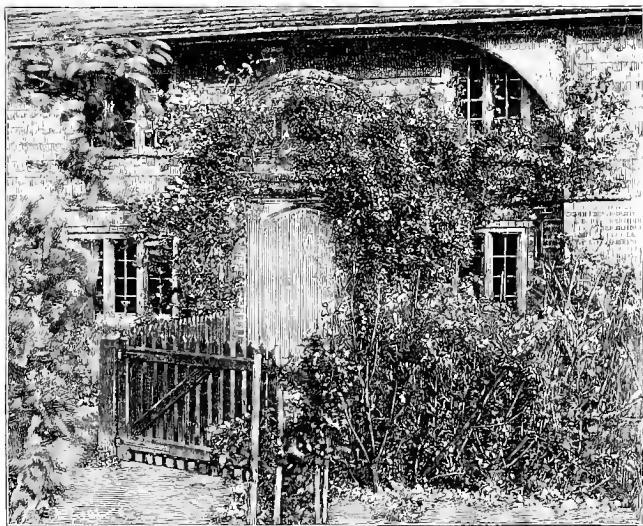
I had mounted the staircase, and passed through a door at the top of it before going from the hall into the offices on the ground-floor ; and, in doing so, came upon rooms evidently intended for sleeping-chambers, but of much lower pitch than those in the front of the house, and bearing an altogether different character. Still thinking of Veronica and her shapely, exacting mind, I was a little disconcerted by the narrow space of the rooms in this portion of the tenement. But when I emerged from them into the kitchen-garden of which I spoke, I more than recovered courage, and resolved to defend my future home against all the feminine objections in the world. For there before me stood a real old manor-house of the end of the fifteenth century, made more watertight since, no doubt, with brick here and tile there, but retaining its pristine character, and looking at you with its strong, unaffected Tudor face. Clearly, the building consisted rather of two houses than of one, built 'back-to-back,' the gray stone tenement, with its greater elevation and ampler pretensions, having been joined on to its older and humbler companion at a later date. Thus what now was back had once been front, and what had originally been complete in itself had not only been added to, but subordin-

ated to its younger companion. I could not then, nor can I now, make up my mind which of the two I prefer to gaze on. I waver in my liking according to my mood, and just as I revert unconsciously, I suppose, to the temper of this century or of that. I kept walking round from one to the other, and felt ineffable peace in musing upon both. The quiet August afternoon, with its long motionless shadows, its slight intimation of silver haze, and its soothing noise of neighbouring rooks; the music of a mill stream I could just overhear, the melodious monotone of contiguous ringdoves, the colour of the nectarines on the wall, the recollection of the ripe and ruddy orchard;—all of these seemed to imbue my mind with a sense of autumnal mellowness, when everything one longs for awaits the plucking, and there is nothing more to be desired. The outhouses were numerous, and it was evident that the older dwelling had once been a farmstead. But they were in excellent repair, and red-tiled like the house itself; and the tiles were silvered here and there with the growth and stains of unremoved lichen. There was accommodation for more horses and carriages than Veronica and I should ever be likely to want, though the stable and coach-house fittings were a little rude; and there were sheds

and stalls for kine and beasts, and lodges for waggons and carts we should never need. But there was not an eyesore anywhere. The road by which I had come ended at the house ; and at the back of the kitchen-garden there ran a country lane, prodigally overhung with the foliage of trees in the very heyday of their English vigour. On the other side of the lane was another park. How wrong Veronica had been ! and what a triumph I should have over her ! *Suam quisque domum spatio circumdat*, I reiterated to myself, with a contentment rivalling that of the cooing wood-pigeons. There was no sound of crowing cock, of barking house-dog, of screaming child. I could see the gray square tower of a village church about a mile and a half away ; but that was the only indication of social life within the range of vision. Retirement, seclusion, and old-world charm—had I not found them all ? Through a nail-studded oaken door, black as ebony with the years, I had descended into the cellars, and had satisfied myself that Veronica, who, from taste not from fanaticism, never touches wine, would have water of extraordinarily fine quality to drink. Moreover, though clear as crystal, and brisk to the palate, it was as soft to the hands as velvet or oatmeal.

I do not know how people consent, save under dire compulsion, to build a house for themselves, or to live in one newly built for them by others. For my part, I like to think that a long line of ancestors, either in blood or sentiment, have slept under the same roof, have trodden the same boards, have genially entertained under the same rafters, have passed through the same doors and up the same staircases, drunk out of the same cellars and eaten out of the same larders I now call mine. I like to think that I am not the first to bring life and death, sigh and laughter, merry-making and mourning, into a human habitation. It is necessary for my contentment, indispensable to my sense of kinship with the Past, that I should know that baby-feet have, generation after generation, toddled along the passages, and children's vacant voices gladdened the corridors which I now tread. I have no desire to invent anything, but only to preserve and perpetuate those things which have long been found good. The society of days gone by is the most friendly and congenial of all forms of companionship, for one peoples and composes it according to the humour of one's imagination. I have never been able to understand why, seeing that one's mother is the most sacred of all human

figures, people's grandmothers should have become a theme for poor and profane wit. Grandmothers, great-grandmothers, great-great-grandmothers, I know, and delight in knowing, had sat in the ingle-nooks of what I that day resolved should be my home : all comely, all with spotless lace caps and cuffs and 'kerchiefs, all kindly, all deferred to, all the real guardian angels of the place. Beautiful



young girls must there have loved and longed, kissed and wept, clapped their hands for joy, and performed innumerable offices of domestic help-

ness and charity. A new house would be to me as intolerable as a new world. Even in restless and changeful days like these, the most powerful influence in the Present is the influence of the Past ; just as the influence of our thoughts, actions, and decisions will be felt more a hundred years hence than they are to-day. Living under the shade of the Past, we feel peaceful and secure. I wonder how many generations of swallows have built their nests and reared their broods under the broad, deep eaves of the hinder portion of the old manor-house I that day contemplated with such forward-looking affection. Four hundred generations of swallows and house-martins and starlings ! Think of that ! They were building there when Shakespeare wrote the lines—

This guest of Summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his bold mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here ; no jutting, frieze, buttress,
Nor coign of vantage, but this bird hath made
His pendent bed and procreant cradle. Where they
Most breed and haunt, I have observed, the air
Is delicate.

I had surrendered myself so entirely to the mellow sunshine and afternoon shadows of the

place, that I fear I had attended but ill to the kindly, if somewhat inarticulate, observations made by Father Time, as he dutifully accompanied me in my devious saunterings. But at length it did dawn upon me, as something not undeserving of my attention, that he had more than once intimated to me that the house had been vacant for two years, but that yesterday 'another gentleman' had been to see it and appeared greatly taken by it. But I had so completely appropriated it in my own mind that this last piece of information troubled me but little. To-morrow I must bring Veronica to see it, and then the matter would be as good as settled.

I consumed the better part of the evening in chanting its praises to Veronica, while cautiously avowing that some of the rooms were rather small and somewhat low. I saw I was not producing all the effect I intended. Veronica has always chosen to consider me subject to dangerous impulses of enthusiasm, and I suppose she deems it to be her duty to put water into my wine. We were off betimes together on the morrow; and I hardly ever made a more anxious journey. It was impossible for her not to admire the two-mile drive through the park and its stately mansion; but I

had worked myself almost into a fever over the uncertainty of her verdict upon my newly-found treasure. Talk of sudden enthusiasms! Veronica fell in love with it full as promptly as I had done, and a load was lifted off my heart. I never knew her so impulsive, so indisposed to criticise, or averse to investigate.

‘No, no!’ she replied to anything I wished to show her or consult her about. ‘It is just what we want. Let us go and see the agent at once. You hear it was looked at the day before yesterday by some one else.’

Only too well pleased to find her in this mood, I gladly consented to drive at once to the house of the agent, who lived, Father Time told us, but a mile away. He received us with all the heartiness of a retired captain of horse, but at once told us that the house was—let! Who had let it? He himself, the agent for the estate, but two days previously. If we liked to go and see the owner of the property, we were free to do so; but it was obvious, he said, we should only be wasting our time.

Nevertheless we went, taking another and a shorter railway journey to a place about fifteen miles off, where he was staying on a visit. I do

not like to say overmuch concerning the grace and attractiveness of Veronica ; but I could see plainly enough they were thoroughly well appreciated on this occasion. For our new acquaintance at once said he should vastly like to have us for tenants. But what could he do? We had received a most kindly welcome, but no practical consolation.

Still I was not cast down ; for, though it seemed absurd to Veronica, I felt an unshakable conviction that I should live for the rest of my days under the shadow and protection of that venerable oak. I wrote to the country agent, enclosing two cheques, each for the same round sum, and authorising him to offer one, and then, if necessary, both, to the tenant who had anticipated me, to be off his bargain. He wrote back saying that what I suggested was not possible, and returning my drafts. Two more days—days of unutterable disappointment and depression—passed away ; and then there came a note from my future landlord, to the effect that he had ‘put his foot down,’ and that he had written to say, as was perfectly true, that he had two agents, one in the country and one in town, that some confusion and rivalry of claims had arisen in consequence, and that, in order to determine the matter in one way or another, he

had decided in my favour. 'Of course,' he added, 'you will pay him any sum in reason for his disappointment.'

But this had been my very own proposition. A few days later he enclosed me a note from the disappointed house-hunter, saying that he had been put to a good deal of trouble and expense, and he could not ask, by way of compensation, for less than—ten pounds!

Veronica says this is my favourite story, and that I have told it too often. But I never get tired of telling it; and I tell it again to myself whenever any piece of small ill-fortune happens to me, and I want still to think myself a favourite of the gods and to have a hearty laugh over that ten pounds.

Spring is tidy, of herself. She has the natural finish and clean-looking bloom of youth. She sheds no dead leaves for you to sweep up, flings about no rotten branches for you to carry away. She is spick-and-span in her new raiment. She has none of the redundant growth of Summer, and the blossoms she sends floating on the breeze make less litter even than Autumn gossamer. Thus I was unusually untroubled concerning the reputation of the Garden that I Love and Veronica's mild reprehensions, and had just settled down in a bend

of the South Enclosure to a perusal of M. Martha's *Les Moralistes de l'Empire Romain*, when I heard her calling, 'Here they are !'

I never know what aspect Lamia will be pleased to present when she brings her radiant presence to our roof ; she has so many and such various moods, and all of them equally welcome. It is a matter of uncertainty whether she will charm our listening ears with the Music of the Future on the piano I bought expressly for her consummate touch, will sing Tuscan Stornelli by the score, or will play havoc with Veronica's guitar as she invents some madcap accompaniment to the latest production of the Shaftesbury Avenue. Nor is it within the bounds of prediction to say whether she will lead me into labyrinthine dialogues concerning the riddle of the universe, or turn all one's most settled convictions topsy-turvy with perfectly sincere paradoxes. Sometimes she will dote on my flowers, and make herself the very Flora of the garden ; sometimes she seems hardly to know that it is there, and rambles discursively, yet always with suggestive point, through the various picture-galleries of Europe. She has no opinions, or, at any rate, they are held provisionally, and until further notice. But, indeed, it is too much to say

that they are 'held'—except in solution, for she does not seem anxious to solve anything. Her mind points to the four quarters of the wind, and, like it, veers unaccountably. Nor was I quite accurate when I said she has every mood, for she is always exhilaratingly cheerful—delivering herself sometimes of the most gloomy prophecies concerning the future of mankind in the highest spirits.

I cannot quite make out what she thinks of the Poet ; but I suspect she somewhat resents his uncompromising good sense, and Veronica's occasionally unfortunate championship of him. I have never been able to understand why such a fuss should be made about what is called Fame, and how any rational human being can desire to obtain it. In the porch of the little church of Kermaria, near Perros-Guirec, in Brittany, I once read the words inscribed on a tablet to a deceased priest, *Amavit nesciri et pro nihilo reputari*. That seems to me the utterance of a sage as well as a saint. But our Men of the Time appear to think differently. I must confess, in justice to Veronica's Poet, that I see no indication of his troubling himself concerning his position in this world. Perhaps that only causes her to be more solicitous on the subject, and, I suppose, she shares the general desire of her sex

to see some solid and practical evidence of success. She reverted to her favourite theme last night, when, as the twilight was deepening, she sat with me and Lamia on the fixed rude seat that girds the bole of my primeval oak, for Lamia inadvertently let fall the observation that the Poet's writings seem to be comparatively little known. He is the least solitary and most companionable of men ; but it happened that at that moment he was not of our company.

‘ If his works are comparatively little known as yet,’ said Veronica, ‘ and every day they are acquiring a wider circle of readers ’—what a characteristic touch was that !—‘ it is because he owes nothing of what reputation he has acquired to factitious circumstance. Born neither in a lofty nor in a humble position of life, he does not interest the world by the lustre of his descent or by the romance of his self-achieved elevation. There is nothing peculiar either in his antecedents or in his career. He has written nothing sensational, and done nothing sensational. He does not excite wonder by being rich or compassion by being poor. He has no patrons and no clients. In all the external conditions of his life he is a very ordinary person. His hair is no longer than that

of his neighbours, he is scrupulously well dressed, he lives with his mother, whom he adores, earns his bread by inspecting elementary schools, and pays his debts with prosaic punctuality.'

'It does not sound poetical,' observed Lamia.

'Precisely. Your view is the view of the public at large. I know, dear Lamia, what you would like him to be and do. You would like him to have been born either in a palace or in a garret, to dress in picturesque velveteen rather faded, to have an eye in a fine frenzy rolling, to look on evening dress as the mark of a Philistine, to run away with his neighbour's wife, and to be perpetually calling attention to himself by some obtrusive impertinence.'

'But, I think,' urged Lamia, 'I could name poets that have achieved considerable celebrity in their lifetime, yet who were, on the whole, perfectly respectable members of society.'

Happily the conversation at this point was arrested by the subject of it joining us. But Lamia was not disposed to allow it to be diverted altogether into another channel.

'We were saying that poets have fewer readers now than formerly.'

'I did not say so,' observed Veronica.

‘Yet, if you did,’ replied the Poet, ‘I almost think you would have been right. Poetry is the delight, as it is the expression, either of very simple or of very elevated natures. The present age has several marks of distinction ; but it is not simple, and it is not lofty. It is practical and pedestrian, caring for astronomy only as an auxiliary to navigation, and for chemistry only as it promotes light, heat, or locomotion. It has no disinterested interest in anything. It is exceedingly inquiring, but it asks for demonstration, and poetry demonstrates nothing. Neither has it any literary interest in literature ; and books, no matter of what calibre, and literature are to it one and the same thing. But why should it be otherwise ? And has it often been otherwise ? Fit audience, though few, was good enough for Milton ; and the poet who wants more is surely very presumptuous and very unreasonable. Indeed, why should he have an audience at all now that he no longer wanders from manor-house to manor-house reciting his verses ? Surely, reading verse to oneself soon palls.’

‘Don’t talk nonsense,’ said Veronica.

‘Don’t talk sense, I was going to say,’ added Lamia.

‘Suppose you do neither,’ I ventured to observe,

‘but recite, instead, some of your own verses to this particular audience at this particular manor-house.’

‘O yes, do!’ said Lamia. Veronica said nothing, but the silence that followed seemed filled with an unspoken request. Hitherto the nightingales had been competing with each other in the contiguous brakes. Now, as though they knew our desire, they desisted for awhile, and in the gathering darkness, rendered deeper by the drooping branches of the wide-spreading oak, we listened to lines none of us had heard before.

If Love could last, if Love could last,
The Future be as was the Past,
Nor faith and fondness ever know
The chill of dwindling afterglow,
O ! then we should not have to long
For cuckoo’s call and throstle’s song,
But every season then would ring
With rapturous voices of the Spring.
In budding brake and grassy glade
The primrose then would never fade,
The windflower flag, the bluebell haze
Faint from the winding woodland ways,
But vernal hopes chase wintry fears,
And happy smiles and happier tears
Be like the sun and clouds at play,—
If Love could last !

If Love could last, the rose would then
Not bloom but once, to fade again.
June to the lily would not give
A life less fair than fugitive,
But flower and leaf and lawn renew
Their freshness nightly with the dew.
In forest dingles, dim and deep,
Where curtained noonday lies asleep,
The faithful ringdove ne'er would cease
Its anthem of abiding peace.
All the year round we then should stray
Through fragrance of the new-mown hay,
Or sit and ponder old-world rhymes
Under the leaves of scented limes.
Careless of Time, we should not fear
The footsteps of the fleeting Year,
Or, did the long warm days depart,
'Twould still be Summer in our heart,—
Did Love but last !

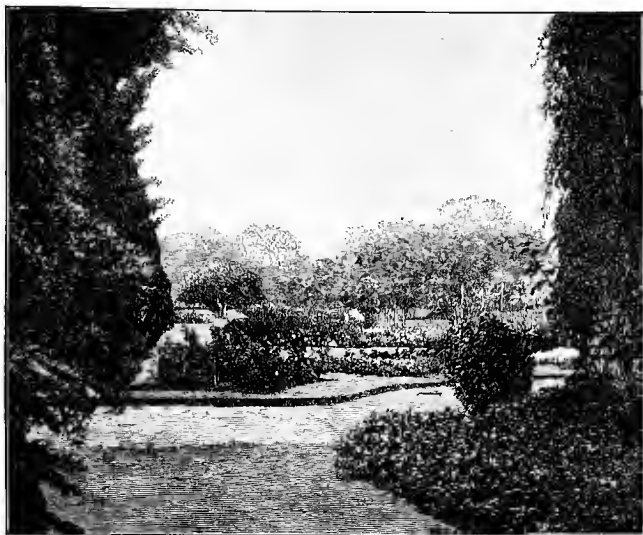
Did Love but last, no shade of grief
For fading flower, for falling lea,
For stubbles whence the piled-up wain
Hath borne away the golden grain,
Leaving a load of loss behind,
Would shock the heart and haunt the mind,
With mellow gaze we then should see
The ripe fruit shaken from the tree,
The swallows troop, the acorns fall,
The last peach redden on the wall,
The oasthouse smoke, the hop-bine burn,

THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE

Knowing that all good things return
To Love that lasts !

If Love could last, who then would mind
The freezing rack, the unfeeling wind,
The curdling pool, the shivering sedge,
The empty nest in leafless hedge,
Brown dripping bents and furrows bare,
The wild-geese clamouring through the air,
The huddling kine, the sodden leaves,
Lack-lustre dawns and clammy eves ?
For then through twilight days morose
We should within keep warm and close,
And by the friendly fireside blaze
Talk of the ever-sacred days
When first we met, and felt how drear
Were life without the other near ;
Or, too at peace with bliss to speak,
Sit hand-in-hand, and cheek-to-cheek,—
If Love could last !

Was it fancy that made me think I caught the sound of a sigh, almost of a sob ? But no untimely word of thanks or praise marred the consentaneous silence. Moon there was none ; only here and there a dimly-discerned outrider of the Night. Then the nightingales resumed their unobtrusive nocturn, and the odour of unseen flowers came floating on the dewy air from the Garden that I Love.



THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE

May 30th.

IF it were Spring perpetually, who would trouble himself to have a garden? When I say this, Veronica smiles incredulously, for she believes that if the whole world were a garden I should still want to have a particular and exclusive plot of my own. It is one of Veronica's superstitions that she knows every winding and recess of my mind. Perhaps it is one of mine that she does not. But,

in truth, I am much more inert than she imagines, and would much rather have my gardening done for me, provided that the result were in accordance with that *qualche idea che ho in mente*, which Raphael said, in answer to an inquiry as to where he had found the type of his Madonnas, was their true origin. Veronica, who is perhaps no more energetic by temperament than I am, but who is more conscientious, likes to see work being done,—partly, no doubt, out of curiosity as to the method of it, but still more in order that she may assure herself it is being done properly. I like to come upon the ground and find the work out of hand and complete. Rather, however, than it should be done wrongly, I will impose on myself any amount of trouble.

Spring is the most skilful of all gardeners, covering the whole ground with flowers, and shading off the crudest contrasts into perfect harmony ; and were it April, May, and June all the year round, I, for one, would never again put spade or seed into the ground. I should select for the site of my home the heart of an English forest, and my cottage should stand half-way up an umbrageous slope that overlooked a wooded vale, from which majestic trees and coverts again rose

gradually up to the horizon. One would make just clearance enough to satisfy one's desire for self-assertion against Nature, and then she should be allowed to do the rest. What are all the tulips of the Low Countries in point of beauty compared with the covering and carpeting of the wild-wood celandine? Your cultivated Globe-Flower and Shepherd's-Bane are well enough; but they have a poverty-stricken look when paragoned with the opulent splendour of the marsh-marigold, that would then grow along the moist banks of the low-lying runnels of my natural garden.

Perhaps I should be accused of exaggeration were I to describe the effect produced on my, no doubt, not impartial gaze by the *Anemone apennina* and the *Anemone fulgens* now in full bloom in the Garden that I Love. Professional gardeners will tell you, in their offhand way, that these will grow anywhere. They will not—being, notwithstanding their hardiness in places that are suitable, singularly fastidious as to soil and situation, and even sometimes unaccountably whimsical in our uncertain climate. The *Anemone fulgens*, or *Shining Windflower*, is common enough, no doubt, where it chooses to thrive, and you may see it in bloom in open and favourable Springs as early as

the month of February, while, with proper arrangement of aspect, you can prolong its dazzling beauty well into May. But the *Anemone apennina*, which I have known some people call *The Stork's-Bill Windflower*, is, as far as my experience goes, rarely seen in English gardens. It used, an indefinite number of years ago, to be sold in big basketsful by dark-eyed, dark-haired, dark-skinned flower-girls in the Via Condotti in Rome, in the months of February and March, and I recollect a good Samaritan putting the finishing touch to my convalescence, after a visitation of Roman fever, by bringing to my room a large posy of this exquisite flower, varying in colour from sky-blue to pure white, and springing out of the daintiest, most feathery foliage imaginable. Perhaps, therefore, it is in some degree the spell of association which makes me feel tenderly enthusiastic concerning the Apennine Windflower. I do not say it prospers in our latitudes as it does in the sunshine-shadow of the Appian Way. But, in most years, it maintains itself against rude winds, unkindly leaden clouds,

And Amazonian March with breast half bare,
And sleety arrows whistling through the air.

It asks for some but not too much shelter, and

I have had to lighten the natural heaviness of my ground, in order to humour it, with well-pulverised soil and a judicious contribution of sand.

But, with all my partiality for these domesticated windflowers, I will not pretend that they can hold a feather to undulating stretches of sylvan anemones ; and in April these would be as numerous as the pink-and-white shells of the sea-shore, which in colour they curiously resemble, around my forest abode. Blending with them in the most affable manner would be the wild or dog-violets, destitute of scent, but making amends by their sweet simplicity for the ostensible absence of fragrance. Where they rule the woodland territory the earth is bluer than the sky. Persons of limited experience concerning Nature's elastic methods have sometimes asked me if Veronica's Poet is not inaccurate in giving the wild windflowers precedence of the primroses in one or two passages of his. Were they as familiar with the seasons as he, they would know that it is beyond guessing to say when the primrose will exercise that sovereignty which it never fails to assert over all the wild-flowers at some period or other of the Spring. I have gathered primroses in basketsful on Christmas Day. Sometimes I have had to hunt for them even in

March. They will at times follow the footsteps of June till its very close; yet in another year they will vanish before May is out. In some favoured seasons they will come and go, and then come again. There 'is no bounds,' to use a favourite phrase of my gardeners, to their fascinatingly fickle behaviour. It may please them to accompany, and rather take the shine out of, the ladysmocks. A twelvemonth later they will show a decided partiality for the society of the dog-violets; and it may so happen that they will elect to wait and enter into competition with the bluebells. Then, indeed, the glory of the heavens is nothing to the glory of the earth. Nature thus rings the changes on her various vernal notes, and does the same thing year after year, but differently. But, in any case, you see, Spring would garden for me, without wage, for fully three months in the year. For I have not by any means enumerated and exhausted her resources. She could, and should, do for me in my intra-sylvan home far more than I have as yet described. Just as one begins to feel a little sad because the wood-hyacinths pale, the red campion takes a brighter hue and holds up a bolder stalk, determined to see over the heads of the now fast-shooting green crosiers of the bracken; and

before these unfurl themselves and get too high, the sleepy foxgloves suddenly remember that it is June, and dapple the lush dingles with their spires of freckled bells. All flowers seem to contain a secret—I suppose because they are silent. But the foxglove has always seemed to me to possess more of the mystery of things than any of its sylvan compeers. Moreover, notwithstanding its almost gorgeous beauty, it calls no attention to itself, but loves solitude, secrecy, and the shade. Of course the primroses and the bluebells would be the reigning beauties of the natural garden. I know a wood of pollarded hornbeam—we are going to take Lamia and the Poet there a few weeks hence—of many acres in extent, where the bluebells grow not only as lush and serried as grass, but well on to three feet in height. The wood has been left untouched and untrodden for years, and the accumulation of rotted leaves, conjoined with something peculiarly favourable in the soil, has produced this fairy world. But there the bluebells have usurped the ground entirely, and do not permit any other wild-flower, even a primrose, to cross the frontier of their territory. Therefore, it is not to it I would exclaim—

O ye woods, spread your branches apace !
To your deepest recesses I fly.

The wood I should want would have to be hospitable, as many a wood in truth is, to every child of Nature that loved its protection. Nor let it be forgotten that this 'desirable site' would have its natural orchard as well : the wild pear, the wild cherry, and the wild crab lighting up the woodland greenery with their gay and delicate blossoms. Nor would eglantine and honeysuckle be wanting. On one side I think I should have a little pasture open to the sun, and coming up to my windows to salute me with daisies, and buttercups, and the milk-sweet breath of ruminating kine.

But Spring has to make way for Summer, Summer for Autumn, and Autumn for Winter, and only one of these knows how to garden, and it has to do so under rather hostile conditions. Summer is absolutely ignorant of the craft, bringing everything on with a rush, and then having to content itself with woods and copses of uniform green ; and, though Winter is a great gardener in one sense, since he makes untiring, if generally unnoticed, preparations for future floral display, he has few flowers to show of his own. Autumn, I grant, knows the art of gardening to perfection, possessing the secret of careless grace even beyond

the Spring. There is an orderly negligence, a well-thought-out untidiness about autumnal forms and colours no other season can match. Even to the garden proper, the cultivated plots of man, Autumn adds such wonderful touches of happy accident that, when it comes, really comes, a wise man leaves his garden alone and allows it to fade, and wane, and slowly, pathetically, pass away, without any effort to hinder or conceal the decay. Indeed, it would be worth while having a cultivated garden if only to see what Autumn does with it. What she does she seems to do unintentionally, and in those almost permanent fits of absence, during which, I suppose, she is thinking of the past. But this meditative touch of hers is more discernible in the cultivated garden than in the woodlands; and she makes the wild-wood too moist and chill with her tears for it to be the fitting accessory of a cheerful home. Spring may be a less mature artist, but Spring's hopeful and sunny open-heartedness more than atones for some little lack of dexterity.

Again, I say, were it always April, May, and June, one would discharge one's gardeners and throw oneself on the gratuitous bounty of Nature. I have heard people remark that the Italians seem

to care little for flowers, and rarely tend their gardens with true northern affection. But then, are not their glowing sunshine and their spacious atmosphere heaven-sent flowers and gardens in themselves? and they feel for these somewhat as I feel for the natural capacity of the vernal season, would it only last, to wean me from lawn, and border, and flower-bed—yea, even from the Garden that I Love.

‘Commend me, my dear Sage,’—it is thus Lamia is pleased at times to christen me,—‘commend me to the wise for talking folly. Your natural or wild-wood garden would pall before the Spring was out. Even the most indolent of us like to assert ourselves occasionally, and I can see the havoc you would play with the free gifts of April and the generous prodigality of May. Man is an interfering animal, and, if you like, woman still more so. In fact, man improves Nature, and then woman improves man, or at any rate compels him to improve himself, in order to obtain her approbation. There is no such thing as beauty unadorned. Nature, left to herself, is a reactionist, always slipping back from worse to worse. Give me the hanging gardens of Ecbatana, and the flowers that are fostered by a thousand slaves.

A garden ! a garden ! O yes, a garden ! But then, it must be a Garden ! The Garden that you Love is well enough ; but I cannot lose myself in it, nor feel that supreme sense of satisfaction which comes of carelessly ruling a splendid kingdom. I want a garden like yours, enlarged and expanded into what Shelley calls a paradise of wildernesses—a garden where the garden is everything and the owner of it nothing.’

‘There are many such, dear Lamia,’ I answered, ‘in this fair and varied England ; and I can show you one whenever you wish to see it. But I fear the owner would count for something, and I must ask his permission before I do so.’

‘Yes, there it is ! The owner always insists on obtruding himself, though he may not be wanted in the very least. Girls marry yachts, town houses, country houses, and shooting-lodges. Why can one not marry a garden ?’

‘So you can,’ I observed, ‘but on the same terms.’

‘But I do not want the same terms ; nor are they necessary. The possessors of the things I named set much store by their houses, yachts, four-in-hands, and salmon rivers. But they think nothing of their gardens, and take these as a matter

of course, as producing vegetables, flowers, fruit, and opportunities for an occasional saunter. Why cannot I marry the garden—the paradise of wildernesses, I mean—and treat all the rest, the owner included, as a matter of course, an accessory and mere occasional appendage?’

‘I will try to arrange it for you,’ I said. ‘But, meanwhile, be pleased to observe that, as you yourself note, the owners of what you describe care next to nothing for their garden.’

‘And, if I married one, perhaps I too should not care for it.’

‘Precisely. The moment I enter a garden I know at once whether it is the owner’s garden or the gardeners’ garden. Nearly all large and costly gardens are gardeners’ gardens, and for my part I would not take them a gift. I don’t think I ever remember envying the gardens of the great; but I continually see cottage gardens, little village or secluded plots, cultivated and made beautiful by the pathetic expedients of the poor, which seem to have a charm mine cannot rival. Almost every garden, and certainly my own, sins against the law of economy. There are too many flowers; and effect, surprise, and suggestiveness are lost. I have seen one clambering rose, one lingering hollyhock,

glorify a cottage home, arrest one's step, and prolong one's meditations, more than all the terraces of Chatsworth. Dear Lamia! cultivate simplicity and tenderness, and crush out, as deadliest poison, what I call your low tastes—your taste for splendour, profusion, and the pride of life. In your case they are not to be indulged in without what you spoke of as the accessory becoming the principal, and the occasional the perpetual. The owner of a garden may not care for it in the least; but you cannot very well keep him out of it.'

Lamia is always so submissive to my sermons that I rarely preach one. She brought this to a close with the observation, 'Of course you are right,' and we passed together into the orchard.

It must not be supposed that the orchard, as it now is, is the orchard I happened on that day when I discovered my lifelong home. That, with the exception of some five vigorous survivors, has disappeared. For one of the burning questions that arose when I took in hand the making of the Garden that I Love and its immediate surroundings, was what to do, and how to deal with, the orchard. The whole world through there is no lovelier sight than a well-planted, well-grown English orchard, whether in its full spring blossom or in the mellow

richness of its autumnal crop. In its one aspect it represents, as nothing else in Nature does, the innocence, the irresponsible freshness, the irresistible



gaiety of simple childhood. In the other, it recalls and reflects the grave fruitfulness of mature and resigned wisdom. Wandering in an orchard, either in mid May or in early October, one feels a desultory and indefinite but all-satisfying sense of peace such as I think one feels nowhere else. One never wants to be elsewhere, for one seems to have got to the heart and centre of things. An orchard at once robust and venerable with years has a great advantage over one whose branches have but a

decade or two of growth ; and the one I then found had all the majesty of manhood, with none of the decrepitude of age. But, as I pointed out to Veronica, it completely cut off the house, and would cut off the garden that was to be, from the park, with all its wealth and world of splendid timber and green interspaces. I never knew her so unyielding in her opinion, and she begged so hard for the old apple-trees, though I pointed out to her I should have ample space in which to plant new ones, that I had to fall back on a compromise, and clear away only one row, the centre one, leaving two goodly rows on either side. My own private opinion is that, though Veronica expressed for this ancient orchard an amount of reverence I have never before or since known her to extend to anything whether old or young, and though she would have had me suppose that on this occasion she was much more sentimental, more romantic, and more conservative than myself, the reason that mainly swayed her was not the one she advanced. Almost immediately after taking possession, I had sold the bulk of the produce of the orchard to an old but still speculative small farmer in the neighbourhood for five pounds ; and I firmly believe that Veronica could not bear the idea of parting with this sum,

which she somewhat sanguinely regarded as an annual incoming, and therefore so much deducted from the rent. It seems very absurd ; but then we all are absurd sometimes, Veronica not excepted. Still I ought to add she is absurd less often than most people. We were not so hard put to it that five pounds more or less mattered in the very least ; and, in the matter of generosity, Veronica would give you any mortal thing you asked for. Indeed, could she have saved those apples of the future, she would probably have given most of them away, and been no richer for my yielding to her. But it was only when I represented to her that the cut-down trees would be a fortune in firewood—which, in her then ignorance, she accepted from me as a fact—that she seemed to grow reconciled to the disappearance of that one middle row. When it was cleared away, the soundness of my opinion was made so manifest that further resistance would have been rank obstinacy and want of taste. For it so happened that we had thereby acquired a view of one of the loveliest portions of the park, and, indeed, became, so to speak, ourselves a portion of it, seeming to be in it, whether, strictly speaking, we were or not. The augmented air of consequence this opening out of the prospect gave

to our modest manor-house, together, no doubt, with nocturnal calculations as to the value of so many cords of apple-wood, completed Veronica's conversion.

But, in carrying out this painful operation, I was as little iconoclastic as possible. One outer row, as not really impeding the view, and as affording protection against north winds for the young orchard I had engaged to plant, was spared entirely ; and, over and above this wise forbearance, I left one magnificent and most shapely tree to stand in the open by itself. It has ever since been one of our chief delights. In springtime I gaze from my study window on its mass of pink-and-white blossoms, on the clumps of daffodils about its roots, on the young lambs frisking and chasing each other round its sturdy bole. In autumn it is laden with small, round, rosy fruit, which is so beautiful an object that I insist, despite repeated insinuations that the apples are all falling to the ground and being spoilt, on leaving it upon the tree to the last possible moment. It is the year's last tribute to our sense of cultivated beauty, and I do not like to ignore the gift. And, after all, what is waste? There comes a time to all of us when we can eat but little fruit but need never

tire of gazing on it. Thus I enjoy my apples and pears and damsons in that way, rather than in the grosser and cruder fashion of younger years—tasting them with the eye and the palate of the imagination. Not but that Veronica and I do not gather, or pick up, many a juicy Northern Spy, Golden Noble, or Ribston Pippin—for we have a tree of these that bears fairly well—and regale ourselves on them in a perfunctory and sauntering fashion. As for Lamia and the Poet, if they happen to be here in September and October, as they pretty usually are, their childish appetite knows no bounds. I suppose the Poet will reproduce his ravenous experience in mellow autumn verse; but all this biting and crunching only makes Lamia look more April-like than ever.

Both the old orchard and the new have led to more controversy and more incidents than any other portion of my modest holding. I so rarely have the advantage of Veronica, that I cannot resist narrating a signal triumph I once enjoyed over her disposition to play the horticultural Cassandra in connection with one of the reprieved apple-trees. The Garden that I Love slopes gradually from north-east to south-west, so that when I wanted to make a tennis-ground at the far end of

the garden towards the park, I had to level up, as the phrase is, moving the earth from the end where stands the Wealden oak, to the southern end where begins what we call our South Border. By this proceeding the new and raised border abutted on one of the old apple-trees, from which it was divided by the garden fence. For two or three years after this operation the tree bore no fruit; and, as the young orchard had meanwhile grown up, and was coming into bearing, Veronica denounced as barren the tree for whose life, along with that of its peers, she had once so eloquently pleaded. 'It will never bear again,' she said. 'It is only an eyesore, and you had better cut it down.' 'I think you are wrong, my dear,' I replied. 'What has happened is this: its old roots have got into the fresh rich soil of the new border, and it is accordingly making fresh wood. Be patient, and it will get over this stimulating change, and bear fruitfully as of old.'

Another year passed, and I still remained a false prophet. But the following May the tree was smothered in blossom, and when August came it was laden with big, splendidly plumped-out apples. I led Veronica to the spot, saying that I wanted to point at her the finger of scorn; and now the fruit

of this ancient but teeming apple-tree is known in our fruit-loft and larder as The Finger of Scorn. It keeps till apples come again. I have little doubt that my new orchard will never be as valuable as the old one, for our forerunners had a thrifty disposition, being, moreover, by no means so ignorant as the presumptuous horticulturists and pomologists of to-day like to suppose, and they planted apple-trees that were both copious bearers and tenacious keepers. Fortunately, Veronica was not at this time skilled in the matter, or she would have led me a life had she known I was not strictly following their economic example. The truth is, I planted for beauty fully as much as for use, and made diligent inquiry about blossom as well as about fruit. So now we shall have unfailing and varied loveliness in April and May, and winter shelves sufficiently well stocked. But it is no earthly use for statesmen to tell the anxious husbandman to foil the dire effects of foreign rivalry and unkind seasons by planting orchards, unless they also tell him what sort of apples to plant. Early crops of fruit that will not keep go for a song, and we all know how little *that* is worth. Yet, if everybody grew none but apples that keep till after Christmas, the glut would come then instead of a few months

earlier. Happy, therefore, they who can regard their orchard as remunerative, so only it be a thing of beauty. I have done the best I can by mine, though in no commercial spirit, having drained it attentively, pruning it yearly, so that light and air can get to the inner branches and buds, and ever and anon manuring it lavishly. And regularly as the end of October comes round, I place a broad band of brown paper midway round every trunk, and smear it pretty thickly with cart-grease, composed simply of tar and resin, so that no harm can come to them by it. In this sticky barrier the female moths, who are wingless, find themselves arrested on their way from the grass to the boughs, in which they would fain deposit their eggs, and are collected by thousands in the morning by the gardeners, as they go their rounds with their lanterns. So far, this plan has kept my trees fairly free from greedy and devastating grubs. Of course, the young trees still have substantial cradles round them ; but I pine for the day when they will grow out of their swaddling clothes, be able to take care of themselves without protection or disfigurement, and make us forget for good and all the stroke of unavoidable Vandalism that swept away their nobler predecessors.

But, indeed, axe, and saw, and pick, and spade had to be employed with remorseless energy almost everywhere when first I set about contriving the Garden that I Love. I had to make a clean sweep of many a misplaced trunk and worn-out shrubbery, and happily I could do so without anxiety, by reason of the ample framework of bole and branch and foliage, that, at a fitting distance, hemmed me round. I have said that we look south-east ; and, to the north, I levelled with the ground a triple row of worthless and sickly fir-trees, putting in their place a border, indeed, almost a plantation, of evergreen and for the most part flowering shrubs of vigorous growth and branching habit. I have often wondered since that they have done so well, for they stand in a somewhat stiff clayey subsoil, and I put them in, because I could not help myself, in November days of heavy and continuous rain. It was a pretty stupid thing to do, but somehow stupidity this time has not had to pay its due forfeit. But I did a stupider thing than that, for I abolished a pond near the north gate leading into the lane that divides me from the other park of which I spoke, regarding it as shockingly unsightly, and replacing it with a mixed copse. How often have I wished that pond back again, that I might

grow water-lilies on its surface, irises on its bank, and reeds and aquatic plants all about it! But we did some wise and far-seeing things also; and the wisest thing of all was to include in the area of the garden so much of the ground of the old orchard



as brought into my pleasure the immemorial oak under which the Poet last night repeated, 'If love could last,' and whither, I notice, our guests are frequently drawn. It seems to preside over the garden with patriarchal tenderness, conferring on it a dignity and an aspect of ancientness it might

otherwise lack. It seems a symbol, indeed a representative, of the toleration the old has for the new, the indulgence age extends to youth. Its girth, a yard from the ground, is some forty feet, and you may saunter under its leaves for over one hundred without turning. So numerous are the boughs, and so dense the leafage, that the turf beneath it is dewless on the clearest nights; and Lamia has threatened more than once to have a mattress carried out, so that she may pass a summer night under its unconventional canopy. I have turned her from her purpose with tales, true enough, of the owls that roost in its murky and perishing hollows, and of the lair of wild kittens that crouch in the dark recesses of its lower bole. I observed, one day last June, that a strange cat had kittened in the long grass that grows on either side of what we call the orchard drive, which is the approach from the park to the house. Going a few days after to see how the little family were faring, I could discern no trace of them, and concluded that hawk and keeper between them had cut them off in the morning of their days. A week later I was hunting for a missing lawn-tennis ball, and stooped down to see if perchance it had run up one of the several recesses or creeks made by the radiating and arching

surface roots of the oak. Ball there was none, but, instead, a pair of steadily flaming eyes. Irked by the long, wet grass, for there had been several heavy falls of rain, and anxious to make her young ones more dry and comfortable, the parent had carried them one by one in her mouth to where they now lay snugly ensconced. But all attempts to approach her were in vain, and not the freshest of milk, nor the daintiest of fish, availed to lure her from her narrow den so long as any of us remained within sight. Her litter grew up as fierce and unsociable as herself; and, for a time, the novel delight of having what we called wild cats crouching or careering over the garden obtained for them life and liberty. But at length sentence of death had to be pronounced. Lamia thinks that one of the ferocious race may still be lurking in one of the oak caves, while overhead there may be a large slovenly nest of owlets gnawing the tit-bits of captured field-mice.

It is to me an unexplained mystery how, notwithstanding a couple of perpetually prowling cats, bird life still flourishes in the Garden that I Love. Were it otherwise, no member of the feline tribe should come within scent or sight of it. At this moment, in bushy Portugal laurel, in tapering

Lawson cypresses, in shapely thujas, and even in the *Picea Pinsapo* and the *Pinus Nordmanniana*, are bulbous nests of thrush and blackbird, solidly rather than carefully put together, as of birds that feel they will probably have to go through the same work again if they have a second brood. The whitethroats prefer smaller and more compact cover, and, trusting to the secrecy afforded by it, have built in aucuba and retinospora, close to the garden paths ; while the linnets are faithful to the thick thriving ivy on the outer wall of the kitchen-garden. I am in hopes that the golden-crested wrens are going to build again in the Maids-of-the-Village—*Félicité Perpetuelle*, if you prefer a foreign name—that clamber from beside the front-door right up to the very topmost curve of the tallest gables ; and if the long-tailed tits are not going to do the same in one of the five old firs my innovating axe has spared, outside the north window of the dining-room, I do not know what they can be about.

Lamia may say what she will about my ideal woodland garden ; but I intend to tell her I am prepared to go still further, and that I would sacrifice flowers to birds, if I were compelled to choose between the two. And of all song-birds,

the thrush is out and away the prince. Rightly
has he been christened a March Minstrel.

Hearing thee flute, who pines or grieves
For vernal smiles and showers?
Thy voice is greener than the leaves,
And fresher than the flowers.

Scorning to wait for tuneful May
When every throat can sing,
Thou floutest winter with thy lay,
And art thyself the Spring.

It is in the branches of my patriarchal oak that every year he commences his carol, which soon becomes continuous from blossoming dawn to fading eve. No other song-bird sings so early and so late in the day, so early and so late in the year. Inspiration never fails him from opening February to mid July; and all through October and November he has, I cannot call them 'poetic pains,' but rather poetic delights, through the two gloamings. I sometimes think he gets betrothed in those months, and that the engagement lasts through the winter till St. Valentine's Day or thereabouts, when he concludes the contract, and becomes—if so amorous a singer possibly can become—a respectable member of society. Perhaps it is the instinctive fidelity of his disposition—

The bird that sings within the brake,
One mate, and one alone, will take ;
While man—

you know the rest—which causes him always to tune up first in the oak that has been there longer than any other tree for miles around,—an inherited and conservative inclination to do honour to the long-established. And then the thrush is so joyous. He is cross sometimes, and scolds abominably, but he is never sad ! He is the most wholesome of all the lyric tribe, and a pessimist could scarcely listen to him long and often, and remain such ; for his notes are a very jubilee, and rebuke the downcast and the despondent. It is only in August and September that he is silent ; and then one feels disposed to ask—

Why dost thou ever cease to sing ?
Singing is such sweet comfort, who,
If he could sing the whole year through,
Would barter it for anything ?

A prosaic naturalist would account for the fact by saying that the bird was moulting ; but I suspect the thrush is of a greedy and self-indulgent disposition, and cannot resist the tempting things spread out before him in such profusion during

the two fruitful months I have named; and he gorges himself so with strawberries, raspberries, red and white currants, and then, if he is let, with honeyed plums and succulent pears, that he grows lazy, comfortable, and unromantic, and is as empty of song as any well-to-do middle-class alderman. When all the fruit has been gathered, and he can no longer go nibbling and making a beast instead of a bird of himself all over the place, he resumes his natural tone, and enlivens the mellow autumn woodlands with his exhilarating song. Fat fare, I fear, clouds the imagination. I must ask the Poet what he thinks of this theory. I believe I have heard him say that his most silent time is the earlier autumn months. Perhaps he too is made taciturn by all the apples he munches with Lamia—suffering in consequence from a sort of dyspeptic silence. How indignant Veronica would be with this prosaic explanation!

It is when the March minstrel first perches and pipes amid the gray branches of the oak that the turf beneath it begins to break into flower, as if in response to his vernal announcement. Celandines, buttercups, and daisies, as a matter of course, always congregated near and about its giant sprawling roots, like the Liliputians about the reposing

Gulliver. But other companions, placed there by one's own hand, then likewise begin to spangle the ground under its comprehensive branches. The winter aconites come first, and, when their bright little golden buttons have fallen off, then peep the snowdrops, to be swiftly followed by the many-coloured, gloriously-caparisoned crocuses. I remember once inadvertently telling a gardener to dibble some crocuses into the lawn ; and I found to my horror, when they came up, he had sown them in drills, like so many onions. They should be scattered about like the accidental and irregular stars of the Milky Way, which they far outshine, for they are not golden only, but white, blue, puce, and every combination of these. Of course, they should seem to have come there, as the phrase is, of themselves, and then they spread over the grass a mysterious haze. I hope yet to persuade the *Scilla sibirica*, and even the *Chionodoxa Luciliæ*, to bear them company in the same enchanted plot. As these February and March compeers flag, up come the lusty spears of the daffodils, single and double, Lent lilies, and the unassuming, incense-scented *Narcissus poeticus*. I am minded to try the more elaborate and delicate daffodils in the grass, but as yet I cannot answer for their flourish-

ing there. Why, too, should not the tulip open its light-refracting chalice under the overarching dome of this natural temple? I will give them a chance. As a matter of course, rook, squirrel, and field-mouse take tribute of these dainty morsels in winter, catching the bulbs when they are asleep. But they are welcome to their share, the squirrel more especially, in return for his delightful antics, which I have watched so often from the writing-table in the front window of the study.

Is thine alone the seed that strews the plain?

The birds of Heaven shall vindicate their grain,

as Pope says in his *Essay on Man*, which I have been recommending Lamia to read, as a corrective to, though of course not a substitute for, the feminine note that predominates in the most popular nineteenth-century verse. She has just asked me, as we returned from the orchard through the copse kitchen-garden, what more I want of woodland flowers than I have got already. For to the south of the new orchard is what Veronica calls, and we all, therefore, have to call, the Poet's Walk—a long, straight, leafy aisle, like one of Keats's

Long verdurous glooms and mossy winding ways,

except that it does not wind, and is not gloomy ; and its grassy path and mixed underwood on either side are at present diapered with primroses, upon



whose cloth-of-gold the bluebells are beginning to assert themselves. Now that she confesses it is more beautiful far than the lawn and its flower-beds, I will acknowledge that perhaps she, too, is

right, and that one does well to remain content with this outer fringe of Nature's all but uninterfered-with territory. The larger celandine there grows to a wondrous size, and the dog's-mercury and lords-and-ladies make themselves very happy. Later on, the white foxgloves will dapple the fresh young greenery; and I have reason to believe, from what I observed last year, that in a few weeks the hardier columbines will show that they love the partial shelter, the broken sunlight and shade, which the narrow strip of not yet full-foliaged copse affords them.

'Oh, tea out-of-doors!' exclaimed Lamia, clapping her hands, as we emerged out of the copse and I perceived the five o'clock meal being prepared in the open air. 'Is not Veronica a dear to humour us? I know she thinks it far too early in the year for *al fresco* banquets.'

'It is to please the Poet,' I said. 'For him she would sacrifice her strictest notions and most methodical ways. Do not flatter yourself, dear Lamia. Neither for you nor for me would she have spread the board *sub Jove* this side Midsummer-Day. But she says she is sure the Poet was born under a hedge, such is his restless craving for the open air, and so she humours his gipsy tastes!'

‘Yes, I have heard him declare that any house is more or less a gaol, and that he always feels the loftiest roof on the top of his head.’

In another moment Veronica was seated before the teacups, which are of exquisite design, but constructed with an absolute disregard of the main purpose of a teacup—which is, I imagine, to keep the tea hot as long as possible—being shallow, and wide at the brim, instead of deep and narrow. When I entirely sacrifice use to beauty in the garden, I am chidden; but I find even utilitarian Veronica sometimes manifests a similar preference indoors. I have often observed that even the best of women are more anxious how a thing shall look than what it shall be, though, I confess that, as a rule, Veronica contrives to combine honest substance with graceful seeming.

‘Where is the Poet?’ I asked.

‘You may be sure he will be here directly,’ answered Veronica.

‘Yes, he has a fine material side to his imagination,’ observed Lamia.

‘As a poet ought to have,’ I chimed in, in a cowardly manner, wishing to propitiate both.

‘I did not mean that,’ said Veronica, ‘but only that as he never does anything irregular, or pseudo-

original, he is sure to be here immediately, since he knows tea is at a quarter before five, and he does not trust to the hedge-flowers to tell him the hour. He will never be, do, or say anything odd, but will comport himself in all small matters like an ordinary mortal.'

At that moment, very much like an ordinary mortal, he joined us, having in his hand a volume which Lamia had asked him to read.

'What do you think of it?' she asked.

'How can I think well of it,' he answered, 'seeing that it is verse, yet is neither musical, simple, nor lucid? Poetry may be very thin poor poetry, even though melodious, unaffected, and transparent; but, unless it possess those qualities, it can scarcely be poetry. It may furnish an excellent intellectual exercise, and be replete with knotty problems of an absorbing kind; but why it should be put ostensibly under the protection of the Muses, I do not understand. You tell me that some persons regard the author as a master, and in a sense he is, since one may learn from his writings how not to write. The greatest writers write like other people, only better. He has evidently been afraid lest he should not be original, but originality is not to be attained by effort. I

once saw an early volume of his, which in style nowise resembled this one ; so that evidently he did not bring his present manner into the world with him. If he were younger, and I could venture to counsel him, I should say, "Keep, in the matter of style, to the *Via Latina* or the Classic Way. It leads to the Capitol."'

'But,' objected Lamia—for Veronica remained spellbound, while I poured myself out another cup of tea—'Classicism is surely dead, and has been replaced by Romanticism.'

'I think not,' said the Poet. 'The Classic can never die—I mean as a living and enduring mode of expression, since it is a natural mode, through the perfection of nature. Neither was it left to the present age, nor to its predecessor, to invent the romantic element in poetry. Every great classic is a great romantic ; every really great romantic is a great classic. Poetry should be romantic in spirit, and classical in manner. Do not people, nowadays, commit the curious error of mistaking disproportion for novelty ? The classic, the romantic, the realistic, are none of them new ; they are all found in the best literature, and in proper proportion and combination. Does the omission, or the extravagant use, of any one of them exclusively,

constitute originality? I should not have thought so. It is so easy either to omit or to exaggerate, to be nothing but realistic, nothing but classical, nothing but romantic; so difficult to be all three. Exaggeration is a sign of poverty, not of power, or at best of waywardness, not of judgment.'

'You talk of poetry,' said Lamia, 'as though it can be reasoned about.'

'And so,' he answered, 'I think it can—being, in its loftiest development, the highest expression of human reason.'

'And what is its loftiest development?'

'As far as expression is concerned, the imaginative presentation in verse of intellectual and moral truths, in conjunction, and, best of all, in interfusion with physical ones—as, for example, in Wordsworth's Ode on *Intimations of Immortality*.'

'But I think I have heard you say that poets should not dogmatise, much less argue.'

'Neither should they; Nature is not controversial. She never contradicts. Her look is all assent.'

'I suppose,' broke in Lamia, 'that is why her companionship is so agreeable.'

'Precisely,' he went on, nowise disconcerted by, and perhaps not observing, the barb that was

aimed at him ; 'and Art should be equally sympathetic and non-controversial. The greatest works never excite noisy enthusiasm, but only quiet, deep-seated assent. When we have read them we say to ourselves silently, "Yes."'

'How true!' broke in Veronica, as though it was time for her to do something more, herself, than sit in rapt and silent assent. 'It is only second-rate writers and imperfect works that are raved about. People never rave about what is indisputable.'

I was getting interested in the conversation,—for, as the sun sank behind the belt of trees at the back of the house, the tulips had one by one closed their petals for the night,—and I feared this somewhat combative proposition might bring it summarily to a close. Happily the Poet happened to be in an expansive mood, and Lamia, whom he always treats with marked consideration, seems to stimulate the flow of his conversation.

'Is it not rather,' he asked, 'that people, even in respect of poetry, rave about what expresses their own sentiments, their own opinions, their own bias? The controversial attitude of mind necessarily leads to utterance, often to violent utterance. The appreciation of beauty induces silence. In

this volume many questions of immediate interest are dealt with, I might almost say, argumentatively ; and people who agree with the writer, incautiously accept what he says as poetry because it is presented to them in the guise of verse. But poetry is a luminous halo which makes thought clearer as well as larger. Here I find nothing but unmusical mist.'

'But I am sure he is in earnest, and earnestness is irresistible,' urged Lamia.

'I have no doubt he is in earnest, and I think he possesses what Diderot said Saint Lambert lacked, *l'âme agitée*, without which it would seem no one can well be a poet. But then the agitation of the soul must be controlled and corrected by the serenity of the mind. Emotion, as Wordsworth says so finely, must be recollected in tranquillity. Indeed, I venture to go further, and to suggest that Wordsworth stated but half the truth, and that emotion and tranquillity must coexist and co-operate at one and the same time ; passion or the heart propelling, judgment or the mind steering and steadying. The finest passages in poetry must have been written under the simultaneous operation of fine frenzy and rigorous self-criticism.'

'Apparently,' said Lamia, 'your Pegasus is a

pair, like Veronica's ponies, *Brandy* and *Soda*, the steadier nag being required to chasten the fretful impulses of the other !'

'Oh !' exclaimed Veronica, aghast at Lamia's profanity, while I shifted my chair in order to conceal from her my appreciation of it.

'An excellent simile,' said the Poet, perfectly unruffled, 'and a humorous representation of a grave truth, which may be stated differently. When Bellerophon sought to mount and tame the winged Pegasus, Minerva, the goddess of Wisdom or Judgment, gave him a golden bridle. Without it he would never have succeeded in his task.'

'Poor Pegasus !' said Lamia ; 'but then, you know, he had been drinking—not tea—but at the fountain of Pirene,—at Acrocorinth, was it not?—and I suppose they managed to put the bridle on him when he had had a little too much. Does poetic intoxication date from that event ? I think a sober poet is——'

'In the sense in which you use the word, hardly a poet at all. Yes, *l'âme agitée* is indispensable ; but for that highest expression of human reason, for poetry of the loftiest order, something more is requisite. I heard a lady—and a lady of letters of much distinction—declare the other day that

Shelley's *Skylark* is a greater work than Milton's *Paradise Lost*, thereby only propounding the limitations of her own taste. No doubt there is a danger lest the poet in dealing with intellectual or moral truths may cease to be a poet, and lapse into the rhetorical philosopher. But if he does not, if on the contrary he succeeds in transfiguring them by the magic light of poetry, then his triumph seems to me supreme.'

'My objection to such poets,' said Lamia, 'is that they take so serene a view of life. I prefer the rebels.'

'I suppose we cannot control our preferences, though I should think we may improve them. But, in literature, serenity is the invariable concomitant of true greatness. The ocean is just as deep in calm as in storm, and provides a better pathway for man. Rebellion in literature, no doubt, implies courage and a certain kind of power. But Reconciliation—provided that the reconciling note be true music, and true poetry—argues a deeper vision, and demands a more majestic voice. I cannot but think that the function of the poet is to make harmony, not out of language only, but out of life as well.'

'Then what an inharmonious note you struck

last night,' said Lamia mercilessly, 'with your refrain, "If Love could last! if Love could last!" Surely that was the voice of a rebel?'

I was thinking that tender resignation is not rebellion, and should, perhaps, have found courage to say so, since the Poet remained silent under the reproach, had not Veronica, after a little fidgeting and a manifest heightening of her colour, said—

'He did not repeat the whole of the poem.'

'Is there more?' I asked. 'May we not hear it?'

'Yet Love *can* last!' he began—

Yet love *can* last, yes, Love can last,
The Future be as was the Past,
And faith and fondness never know
The chill of dwindling afterglow,
If to familiar hearth there cling
The virgin freshness of the Spring,
And April's music still be heard
In wooing voice and winning word.
If, when autumnal shadows streak
The furrowed brow, the wrinkled cheek,
Devotion, deepening to the close,
Like fruit that ripens, tenderer grows;
If, though the leaves of youth and hope
Lie thick on life's declining slope,
The fond heart, faithful to the last,
Lingers in love-drifts of the past;

If, with the gravely shortening days,
Faith trims the lamp, Faith feeds the blaze,
And Reverence, robed in wintry white,
Sheds fragrance like a summer night,—
Then Love can last !

I do not know what demon of contradiction and discord possessed Lamia, but she seized the banjo which happened to be lying by her chair, and burst into an atrocious music-hall medley with which she had not hitherto favoured us. It was quite irresistible—Lamia invariably is—and we all three fairly burst out laughing. *Solutæ tabulæ risu*, and the five o'clock tea-table was abandoned in spontaneous merriment ; though I could see Veronica was vexed with herself for yielding to the general levity. I strolled round the garden alone, examining the lilacs, to see how far on they were to flowering, and repeating to myself the passage concerning the different way in which the tender passion comes to man and to woman, probably recalled to me by the Poet's championship of Love, and the latter lines of which are not, perhaps, unapplicable to the young person who so sacrilegiously followed him—

Love's way with us and you is different.
You mind me of the swallow that is here

To-day, and all at once, that yesterday
Was nowhere to be seen, so swift he comes !
While we are like the lilac-tips, and bud
For a provoking season ere we break.
We dream, not even knowing that we dream,
Up to the very moment that we wake.

My lilacs were dreaming still ; and I was just going to see if some new tea-roses from Lyons in an open bed were likely, this year, to be beforehand with them, when I heard Lamia singing to the piano an air I had not heard before. So I sauntered towards the house, to find she was improvising an accompaniment of her own, most sweet and tender, to the words—

If Love could last ! if Love could last !

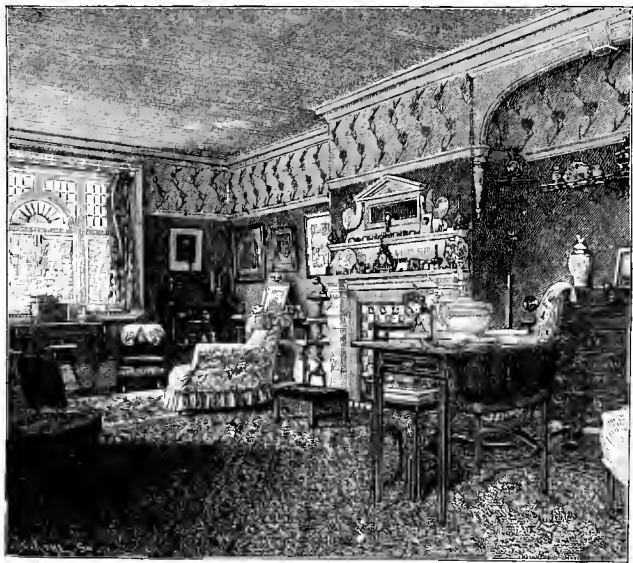
Also attracted by the strain, the Poet joined me, and, on catching the words, he would fain have entered and stood by her while she paid him this charming compliment. But I laid my hand upon his arm.

‘ You had better not go in. If she knew you were here, it is a hundred to one she would break off again into her music-hall foolery.’

‘ What a wonderful memory she must have ! ’
he whispered, as she went on tentatively singing

couplet after couplet of his lyric, never marring the metre, though sometimes interpolating some less happy word of her own.

‘We remember what impresses us, and she is



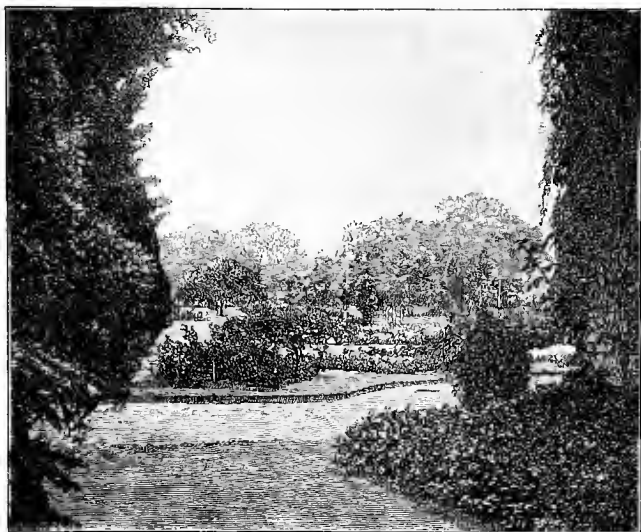
very impressionable. You wrote the poem, but she feels it. But is it not always so? The poet, with his gift of tongues, interprets the thoughts of all the world.’

‘Hark!’ he said. ‘How beautiful! She is the interpreter, not I.’

There, spellbound, we listened to the young

girl, surmising with that far-reaching instinct that belongs only to women an experience she of course as yet could never have had, and spontaneously setting to music, as appropriate as sweet, the consoling words—

If, with the gravely shortening days,
Faith trims the lamp, Faith feeds the blaze,
And Reverence, robed in wintry white,
Sheds fragrance like a summer night,—
Then Love can last !



THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE

21st June.

LIFE is one long recantation, and I want to recant what I said about the Garden that I Love looking its best about the first of May. It is now nearly the middle of June, and I protest that never, never, never, was it so beautiful as now. You need not believe me; and I daresay I shall contradict myself afresh before the year is out. But do we not all act thus; being so constituted by a kindly

dispensation that, when beauty or joy attains to a certain pitch of intensity, we feel we have never before experienced any so great? This readiness to exaggerate present pleasure is compensation for the kindred inclination to magnify present pain. Have we not all of us seen, a hundred times, the loveliest view, the best horse, the most beautiful woman, in the world? There is no call to be exact and consistent in our admirations; and I again declare that I have never seen the garden looking anything like so fair as at this hour. Even Veronica says the same; and precision of statement is one of her innumerable virtues.

Had it been my lot to be present at the ardent discussion conducted in the time of Abelard between Nominalists, Realists, and Conceptualists, I think I should have asked if, when any one used the word Flower, as he fancied, in the abstract, he did not think Rose in the concrete. The rose is the typical flower all the world over, and the mind cannot get away from its representative personality. Withal, in most gardens the rose enjoys but a brief reign, much briefer, indeed, than that of many another flower. But, so long as it blooms in profusion, it throws into the shade all other pretenders. At this moment fully one-half of the front of the

house, from ground to gable, is hidden under bunches of one white clambering rose.

. . . Round my casement blow
Those clustering roses fancy hath baptized,
Maids-of-the-Village ; and adown they hang,
Like to a waterfall you see far off,
That foams but moves not.

Let me confess I did not plant that rose. I found it here when I came ; but neglect was beginning to curtail its mural territory. So I had it taken down, and a very difficult, thorny business it was ; cut out all the older wood, carefully pruned and trimmed it, nailed it up again upon the wall, and manured it richly about the roots. There must be millions of roses on it now, and it is a glory and a show through all the leafy month of June. There is a little climbing blush-rose that tries to compete with it, but ineffectually, for it is so much less hardy, though I do my best to see that it gets fair-play. It is curious to watch how the combative instinct exists even in peaceful-looking flowers. The flourishing rose I spoke of looks south-east, and therefore enjoys a capital aspect. But on the northern side I planted a white Ayrshire rose ; and, not content with the domain assigned to it, which is fairly extensive, and as if aware there is a

rival round the corner, it is beginning to show itself there also, and evidently means to enter into competition. I shall tolerate its tendency to warfare, because it blooms a second time, though of course less profusely, in October, when the Maids-of-the-Village are thinking only of the Winter, and make their sober arrangements accordingly. Veronica admires these last heartily enough—who could help doing so?—when they are in their first virgin beauty. But, when they begin to go off, they make a daily litter of fallen petals about the door which are often blown into the hall; and then Veronica speaks of them somewhat slightly, as of things possessed of no sense of order or neatness. In order to escape her reprobation—for she always holds me responsible for anything that goes amiss in the garden—I turned the Poet on to her, who obligingly hummed—

Now that milch-cows chew the cud,
Everywhere are roses, roses;
Here a-blow, and there a-bud,
Here in pairs, and there in posies.
Roses from the gable's cliff
With pale flaky petals strewing
All the garden paths, as if
Frolic Summer took to snowing.

The truth is—though I dare not tell her so—Veronica, though she knows a good deal about flowers, is a gardener only by accident, and because I happen to be one. Otherwise, she would be more indulgent with a certain untidiness there is in Nature, and without a sympathetic toleration of which one cannot have a garden of the better sort. I am conscious of living in awe of her rooted detestation of irregularity, but I cannot suppress an emotion of pleasure when the fallen petals of the Maids-of-the-Village baffle us both. Once she threatened to have the hall-door shut upon them ; but I quoted Goldsmith's line about the houseless stranger, and she desisted.

If anything could make me wish to have a large house instead of a small one, it would be that I might have a wider expanse of wall up which to grow clambering roses. Far from being surprised that there was once a War of the Roses, I wonder the world is not perpetually at war about them, there are so many claimants for the crown. Every one has a *Maréchal Niel*, its early appearance, its generosity in blooming, the exquisite arrangement of the petals, and its dry aromatic fragrance, rendering it indispensable. But I wish it would hold up its head and look one fearlessly in the face, as other

roses do. The at present favourite white *Niphetos*, which has never quite won my affections, has rather the same habit, and I infinitely prefer to it, at any rate for outdoor life, the old *Lamarck* or *Solfaterre*. It is unwise ever to dogmatise about a rose, and therefore I will not say that *William Allen Richardson* does not thrive on a south-eastern aspect. But with me it will not, though it faces the west most cheerfully. On the recommendation of an expert, I am going to try how *Bouquet d'Or*, *Rêve d'Or*, and *Madame Berard* will like fronting north. These, of course, are tea-roses, and, even if they fail me there, the hardy Ayrshire ones will continue to console me for a disastrous experiment. It is the signal distinction of the *Gloire de Dijon* to care little or nothing towards which point of the compass you place it. But, with the exception of one that divides a wall with an *Ampelopsis Veitchii*, without suffering in the least from its tight embrace, I grow all my *Gloires de Dijon* along a fence in the stable-yard. Why should stable-yards not have flowers to beautify them as well as more romantic-sounding nooks and corners? Never, from the middle of May to the end of November, is the Garden that I Love—for I regard every hole and corner round about as belonging to it—with-

out *Gloire de Dijon* roses. Sometimes they suffer from grub and canker in the Spring, and many a bud has to be nipped off, and assuredly they are more healthy, and therefore more lovely, later in the year. They then have a roseate heart, which greatly beautifies their pale yellow petals ; and when one would be perfectly happy for a few seconds, one buries one's nose in one just full-blown.

Veronica has just been asking me what I mean by sticking in small rose-stocks here, there, and everywhere, in the most unaccountable places and situations, and I can see she suspects I have got roses on the brain, and that if I am not checked in this tendency I shall soon qualify for the County Lunatic Asylum.

‘Do you not remember,’ I plead, ‘the roses in the Embassy Garden at Rome, which soared and flowered right to the very top of the tallest cypresses ; and surely you can recall growth of almost equal vigour in the yellow Banksia roses in many a villa garden round Florence, nay, in the very heart of Florence itself?’

‘Yes,’ was the reply ; ‘but this is not Italy, and these forlorn-looking little plants will never grow higher than your head, even if they accomplish that modest feat.’

Veronica is sceptical and pessimistic. I am credulous and sanguine ; and so I mean to give a number of hardy climbing roses a chance of getting as high in this world as the comparatively diminutive elevation of English evergreen trees will allow. What would be the good or the pleasure of a garden if one did not make experiments ?

One experiment I have made, which was declared to be exceedingly rash, and yet it has succeeded beyond all expectation. I have planted a couple of hundred tea-roses in open beds, and they have done magnificently, and have given me greater joy, I think, than any flowers I ever grew. As a rule, people grow tea-roses against walls, as I myself likewise do in the enclosed kitchen-garden. But the belief that they are delicate, and absolutely require the protection and encouragement of a wall, is a sheer delusion. I do not mean to say the flowers are not somewhat larger when the stems are trained against red brick ; but they certainly do not bear as profusely, and all the beauty of their natural habit is thereby sacrificed. For my part, I should grow tea-roses in the open, even if they did not open their flowers, if only for their long lissom stems and graceful buds. But they flower liberally and without interruption from May to the

end of November. When I first put them into the ground, on their arrival from Lyons, Veronica asked what they were, they seemed so diminutive and to have so little life in them ; and, though I sheltered them through the winter with a little withered bracken, they had apparently dwindled so by March that she again inquired compassionately what I intended to do with them. She was answered by the middle of April, when they put forth long vigorous shoots, and were the pride of the garden all through the Summer and Autumn months. Last Winter I treated them similarly ; and again, since we had twenty-eight degrees of frost, they were cut down to the ground. But what they are at this moment I should require the help of her Poet to describe. Faultlessness in flowers is almost as rare as in human beings ; but these tea-roses are absolutely faultless. Their stems and their leaves are as graceful as their buds ; they bloom continuously for six months ; not one of them is of a bad, vulgar, or tawdry colour ; and they never suffer from blight, fly, or mildew. I carpet their beds with violas, purple, white, or yellow ; and they tolerate, and indeed favour, these dwarf intruders with the utmost amiability.

With this honourable and blameless record

compare the annual register of the Hybrid Perpetuals. At this moment they are looking their very best, having got over their troubles of the Winter and Spring, and not yet suffering from the trials of Autumn. A hundred and sixty are in full blow at the farther end of the tennis-ground abutting on the orchard ; and I daresay many of them would be pronounced prize roses. But all through the Winter months they were no more beautiful nor sightly than currant-bushes. At the end of March they were cut back by the pruning-knife, so that they resembled young gooseberry-bushes similarly treated. By the end of April, and all through May, they were the favourite resort and provender of grub and green-fly ; and now that, with the aid of finger and thumb and syringe, they have outgrown their enemies, many of them have flowers which, however lovely for a day or two, fade in an exceedingly unbecoming manner, and with no eye for colour. In August and September most will show rusty leaves, the miserable aspect of which is not atoned for by the second flowering of the rest. I must get rid of those congregated one hundred and sixty, though I know protest will be raised in an influential quarter. Still, I can see the tea-roses are increasing in favour, and when I carry in a branch

a yard long, beautifully curved, of radiant colour, and surmounted by a perfect posy of large delicate flowers, I am employing the best form of advocacy in order to carry my point. Once prove that you can have rose-beds in flower for six months of the year, and who will gainsay you? Sometimes I think I should like to have nothing but tea-roses ;



but the fit of unreasonable exclusiveness soon passes away.

Thus, at present at any rate, 'everywhere are roses, roses.' But the loveliest of all, be it said with reverence, are in the June hedges. All the rose-growers in France have not produced a flower

that gets so close to one's heart as the English eglantine.

In Poet's Walk the dog-roses find a congenial home; and the sweetbriars are gradually doing themselves justice in the outlying borders. Just now they are covered with their pale pink flowers, which will, when Autumn comes, be glowing coral hips. The yellow Austrian briar, which thrives so heartily in many a cottage garden hereabout, has not yet condescended to make much of a show in mine, though I trust it will in due course. I sometimes think there are flowers that refuse to decorate the *superba civium potentiorum limina*, the porches and parterres of the well-to-do, and, with the discriminating partiality of true kindness, reserve their full beauty for the narrow territory of the poor. 'You cannot want me,' they seem to say, 'for you have so many other flowers and shrubs. Here I am the only flower dearly prized and exclusively honoured. Must I not therefore do my best for those who entertain me so tenderly?'

Lamia will not concede to roses the place of primacy I claim for them, and puts in a good word for the white pinks that are now in their Midsummer beauty. The whole of the North Border is edged with them; and thus there is

A running ribbon of perfumèd snow,
Which the hot sun is melting rapidly,

a foot wide, and between fifty and sixty yards in length. They are only the old-fashioned white pinks, but they are far more sweet-scented than their pretentious successors, for which it is easy to find room elsewhere ; and, after sundown, they follow one's footsteps with their penetrating fragrance. They last in full beauty for a whole month ; and, when their withered heads have to be clipped off with the shears, their silvery foliage still makes a delicately effective edging. Behind them, English, Spanish, and German irises are competing with each other, though these last flowered a little earlier than the others. I do not pretend to grow the more delicate irises, nor can I boast of the recently-imported beautiful Japanese irises. Irises like to be dry in Winter and moist in Spring and early Summer ; and that is a combination of conditions not easily contrived in England, and is rather beyond my resources. Veronica thinks it is due to my incapacity, for she is so accustomed to bend the inorganic to her will indoors, that she imagines the organic and the living can be made equally pliable. Ever since she saw the *Iris Susiana* flowering faultlessly on stalks nearly three feet high

near Florence, she has wondered why she does not find them in the Garden that I Love. But I have watched them growing in English gardens more favourable to the iris than mine, and they were but doleful specimens of a gorgeous tribe. A garden is not a collection of curios. It is for the most vigorous, the most lovely, and the most fragrant flowers that room should be found ; and many of these demand, for the full display of their charms, that the atmosphere should be seen all round them, and that they should not be too much elbowed by their neighbours. It is, perhaps, a little incautious to say this, for it may be pressed into the defence of those terrible villa borders, where every plant is a specimen, is duly staked and tied and trained, and they all stand at stated and goodly intervals from each other. I pray you avoid it. But, if you run into the opposite extreme, and crowd certain herbaceous plants overmuch, you curtail their growth and their grace, and incur the risk of losing them altogether. I am greatly interested in seeing the result of a new border I have made in the extreme north angle of the garden, and which Veronica has christened Poet's Corner,—I believe she will in time label every nook and walk with his name,—because, before I made the border, it

was a favourite resort of his when the wind was in the east, and he wanted to read in the open air and yet be snug and warm. There are two walls, at right angles to each other, neither of them more than thirty feet long. Both are old ; one of them is of gray stone, the other of red brick. Against them, and therefore hiding them completely, were some tall but rather scrubby laurels, the favourite nesting-place of the blackbirds.

The laurels were cut down and stub-grubbed, and the roots, branches, and leaves all burnt in a heap, whereby I provided myself with a certain amount of wood-ash. The ground on which they had been growing proved to be as bad as it well could be ; so out it came to the depth of three feet. Broken bricks, mortar waste, and accumulated dry rubbish of all kinds, even to battered tin-cases and empty blacking-bottles, were thrown in, inexpressibly to the delight of Veronica, who thus saw disorder disappear and buried out of sight, and pound and shed cleared of their abominations and made clean and sweet again. Effectual drainage was thus secured. On the top of this I placed a layer of half-rotted emmet-casts, so as to keep the drainage fairly open. The superincumbent soil is a mixture of loam, stable-manure, leaf-mould, river-

sand, and burnt vegetable matter ; and if herbaceous things, and bulbs as well, do not flourish in quite lordly fashion in this compost, the connection between cause and consequence must have been severed. At any rate, *Gaillardia grandiflora*, *Helenium Pumilum*, *Funkia* or *Plantain Lily*, *Telekia*, *Eryngium amethystinum*, the hardy *Plumbago*—such a dear little cerulean flower, growing among seemingly discoloured leaves !—*Centaurea macrocephala*, *Trollius europæus*, will have a fair chance of distinguishing themselves ; and, to judge by their present appearance, they are going to do so. Behind them, and either trained against the wall, or standing in relief against it, are *Kerria*, both single and double, *Forsythia Buddleia*, *Pyracanthus*, *Pyrus japonica*, *Ceanothus*, white and lavender-coloured *Clematis*, and one or two tea-roses, among them the dainty *Marie van Houtte*. Where the walls meet, they rise into the air like two waves that form a double crest ; and up their joint buttress I am growing a *Clematis montana*, with a sort of suspicion that it will end by running all along the top of the wall. When it does so, its white supramural band will be a worthy rival of the white pinks, and will flower even before them. I have not exhausted the list of herbaceous things

in the border ; and in front of them are daffodils, irises, lilies, among them Saint Bernard and Saint Bruno, which the Italian devotional painters are so fond of introducing into their pictures. Their Latin names are *Liliago* and *Liliastrum*. The border is six feet wide, and is edged by a narrow row of rough stones, along the rim of which, next Spring, shall flower *Cyclamen Coum*, *Chionodoxa Luciliæ*, *Scilla sibirica*, *Leucojum vernum* or Spring Snowflake, crocuses, snowdrops, London Pride, and many a stonecrop, saxifrage, and sedum.

Veronica and I often say we wish we could look once more, just for a moment, on the little narrow sward in front of the house, as we saw it that day when old Father Time was mowing the neglected grass. But sudden transformation scenes are to be witnessed only in pantomimes, and Nature permits things out-of-doors to change so gradually that one is prevented from obtaining a sharp and definite apprehension of the difference between the present and the remoter past. I came comparatively a novice to the trade, and began with no arrested set of dogmas concerning the making of a garden. Accordingly, I educated myself on my mistakes, planting trees, designing borders, and arranging groups of beds in utterly wrong fashion. Is it not

much better, and certainly it is far more interesting, thus to pass through ignorance into knowledge, rather than to put oneself a passive spectator into the hands of a professional gardener, whether of the formal or of the landscape school? No one can rightly call his garden his own unless he himself made it. The Poet, too, has a garden, and one by no means to be disdained ; and Veronica told me that when, the other day, some tactless person asked him which of his works he likes best, he replied, 'My garden.' I think if I had written his poems, and were asked that question, I should make the same reply. A garden that one makes oneself becomes associated with one's personal history and that of one's friends, interwoven with one's tastes, preferences, and character, and constitutes a sort of unwritten, but withal manifest autobiography. Show me your garden, provided it be your own, and I will tell you what you are like. It is in middle life that the finishing touches should be put to it ; and then, after that, it should remain more or less in the same condition, like oneself, growing more deep of shade, and more protected from the winds.

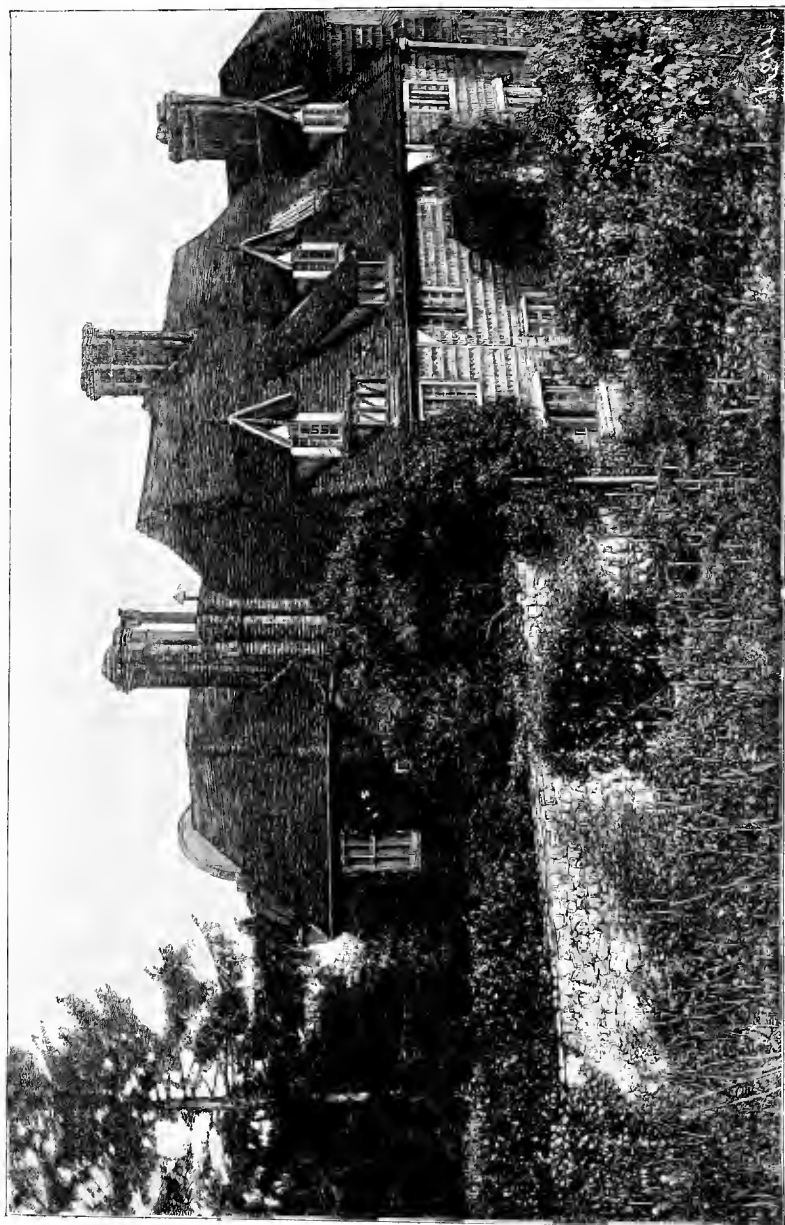
I am well aware that, according to orthodox notions, against which I have not a word to say,

the approach to a house in the country should not be through the garden, but on the other and northern side of the dwelling, so that seclusion should be secured against carriage-wheels, and you may be able to say 'Not at home' without incurring suspicion of inhospitality or unfriendliness. But we are humble folk, with a home which, if beautiful, is unpretentious, and when you drive through the orchard-walk to see us, you come on the front door, standing wide open, on the dining-room and drawing-room windows, and on that cascade of foam-white roses I lately spoke of, so that you see the whole charm of the greater portion of the garden at once : north border, south border, the front of the house, the lawn, the tennis-garden, the oak, the orchard ; only the South Enclosure, Poet's Walk, and, of course, the little walled garden behind the older part of the manor, being withheld from your view. There are seventeen beds on the lawn, and there is a wide border of flowers under the dining-room and drawing-room windows. But the beds on the lawn are not congregated close together, as in a terraced or strictly formal garden. They lie upon the lawn, some of them being at considerable distance from each other, but none of them losing touch, so to speak, of the rest ; and,

if one of them even were removed, the entire harmony or balance would be destroyed. In the centre of the lawn are two crescent-shaped beds of rhododendrons, enclosing in their curve, but with a circle of grass between them, a round bed whose chief glory are two well-established and profusely-flowering *Clematis Jackmannii*, clambering up rough pine-stems. Of the seventeen beds, twelve are what I may call permanent beds, containing either herbaceous plants eked out in Spring with bulbs and in Summer and Autumn with annuals, or tea-roses and their carpet of violas. These last are four in number, and run round the edge of the gravel curve immediately in front of the house two and two, with a non-permanent star-shaped bed between them. There are only five beds not thus disposed of; but I dwell on them because they provide for me the solution of a controversy about which so much has been said and written. In Spring, as I have said, they contain tulips and forget-me-not. But in Summer they are reserved for and dedicated—yes—to geraniums, iresine, white-leaved centaurea, ageratum, and even sometimes to calceolarias, geraniums, and lobelia.

No one can admire less than I do a so-called garden—for a garden it is not—surrendered wholly

to symmetrical lines or groups of colour; and I once nearly banished them from the Garden that I Love. But careful experience showed me that they serve as an invaluable foil to the other and more numerous beds I have called permanent, and whose flowers soar irregularly into the air, and which are orderly without being prim or trim. I have a great liking for the strong-growing cannæ; and this year I have a couple of beds which Veronica declares are already most successful, and which will look much more luxurious a month hence, and will continue in that condition till supervenes the first sharp frost. The beds are parallelograms twelve feet by eight. In their centre are the cannæ, liberally manured and copiously watered. Outside them are rows of scarlet zinnias, and outside these grows variegated maize, green-and-white. The bed is edged with the dwarf profusely flowering yellow zinnia. There is nothing formal about these beds any more than there is in the neighbouring ones, where larkspur, evening primroses, ribbon grass or gardeners' garters, phloxes, fuchsias, everlastings, blue cornflowers, annual gaillardias, clarkias, lupines, dahlias, sweet-williams, pinks, and mignonette, fight it out among themselves as to which shall have the lion's share of the



space. But these carelessly-ordered and high-growing flowers would not be a hundredth part so effective as they are, were it not for the contrast afforded by the beds of regular and low-lying plants in their vicinity. Have I said, before, that exclusiveness in a garden is a mistake as great as it is in society? If I have, may I say it again, for it is an important truth that needs to be reiterated. Moreover, it will sometimes happen that, towards the beginning of October, if not before, the more rampant flowers, having nearly outbloomed themselves, begin to wane; and then the lingering bloom of the less beautiful bedded-out things acts as a sort of compensation, and prolongs the life of the garden, indeed even of the Summer. And then their extremely brilliant hues suit the natural mood of Autumn,

The last still loveliest till—'tis gone, and all is gray.

'It is all very well,' said Lamia, 'to prate of your beds and your borders, your perennials and your annuals, your tea-roses and your pæonies; but I shall never believe in you till you turn your little walled kitchen-garden into a real pleasure-ground, intersect it with box edgings and paths of broken

brick, grow rosemary, rue, lavender, old-fashioned heartsease, little China-roses, and dwarf fuchsias, in rectangular beds, have a sun-dial in the centre with a sage apophthegm in a dead language inscribed on it, educate a peacock to strut slowly along the coping of the wall, and induce Veronica to let her maids lean out of those fascinating windows in mob-caps and puffed aprons. To Jericho with your Jerusalem artichokes, your early strawberries, and your sybaritic asparagus. Grub up your *Walburton Admirable*, your *Kirke's Blue*, and your *Louise Bonne*, and let hollyhock and sunflower use the old red brick for background.'

'Dear Lamia,' I replied, 'why do you probe an ever open wound? I shall not die in peace unless I fulfil that dream. The place is made for it, and I plan it over and over again, day and night, night and day. But what would Veronica say? Already she protests against the narrow space dedicated to potato and onion, to cos lettuce and to curly kale, and declares she is ashamed sometimes of the paucity of our Winter vegetables. Moreover, she bewails, not without some justification, my lavishness on the Garden that I Love, and she knows perfectly well, as I do myself, that the sun-dial and the peacock project would mean another gardener,

to say nothing of the incidental making of kitchen-garden ground elsewhere.'

'What cowards men are!' murmured my companion. 'Veronica might be your wife instead of your sister.'

'Are you calculating,' I asked, 'on intimidating your husband? Do not make too sure of that. And then, you see, Veronica is very good about it, for I have flowers along all the kitchen-garden paths, in the copse garden as well as in the walled garden; and if you will go and look, you will see sunflowers and hollyhocks coming up there in various places to bloom in September. Those white sweet-peas you are wearing, and that become you so admirably, were plucked where the sun-dial haply might stand; and scarlet-runners, later on, will diversify the sober utility of cauliflower and parsnip. Life, Lamia, is a lesson in compromise; and we are never further from being satisfied than when we have got all we want. That unattainable peacock is perhaps the surest guarantee of my content.'

'I shall never stir you into insurrection,' she said. 'You are as bad as the Poet.'

She had been led to return to an old subject, I discovered later in the day, by the perusal of a volume she had brought with her, and which pro-

fessed to give both sides of the question between the advocates of landscape gardening and the champions of the formal garden. She had it in her hand again, when, after dinner, we betook ourselves to a spot I have not described, but where, in the warm Summer days, I always find our guests pass much of their time. Almost adjoining the house, and nearly in a line with it, is a long substantial shed, in which in the old days the cattle must have been stalled during the Winter months. On the side towards the yard it is faced with rough, strong weather-boards, but on the garden side, fortunately, it is of stone. Both sides are now well covered with Irish ivy; and on the gravel path which winds along its garden side stand six umbrageous lime-trees. But, to Veronica's eternal honour, for the scheme was mainly hers, all the old cattle-stalls were taken out and used for firewood; and, being of ancient, hard, and thoroughly seasoned oak, they warmed us for nearly one Winter through. She then summoned the village carpenter, lined the whole of the inside with pitch-pine, which was duly and daintily varnished; made a window here, and a skylight in the old red tiles there, and then constructed for us an outdoor smoking-room, the upper part of which is well stocked with bookshelves,

and—final and greatest triumph of all—provided me with a spacious Summer bedroom, which, from the 1st of May to the 31st of October, is the delight of my existence. We thus acquired additional room for Summer hospitality indoors ; and my outdoor sleeping chamber is so arranged that, in the daytime, it presents the aspect of an unostentatiously furnished sitting-room. The Poet greatly envies me this *succursale*, as well he may ; for, were it his, he would be able to consort with the moon, the stars, the dawn, the sunrise, as he listed. Out of the capacious shed there still remained space enough for a box-room—I am not sure that the obtaining of this much-prized convenience was not the *idée mère* of Veronica's entire project—an apple-loft, and a recess for storing coals when they are at Summer prices, whereby we avoid coming between the hammer and anvil of capital and labour, when the latter strikes or the former locks-out.

Under the limes, which are flowering for the first time, last night after dinner we all repaired, and found a brightly-burning Princess lamp—Veronica prides herself on her lamps, which certainly outshine and are more numerous than any I know elsewhere—on a wicker-table outside the smoking-room, and four garden-chairs, awaiting us. The

thermometer had, in the daytime, been seventy in the shade ; the air was warm, dry, and balmy ; and the round Midsummer moon was just getting clear of the wych-elms in the north-east meadow. It only needed the aroma of coffee, which was soon forthcoming, and the fragrance of the cigarette, which the Poet shortly lighted, to establish among us a sense of perfect peace.

But peace is not what Lamia invariably loves ; and I suspect she imagined she had brought with her torch and sword, in the shape of the volume from which she began to read a controversial and most acrid passage.

‘The Battle of The Gardens,’ said the Poet. ‘That seems not quite as it should be. The serpent of discord should surely be kept out of our modern Edens. And might not one say to the champions of this discussion, as in the dispute about the colour of the chameleon, “You both are right, and both are wrong” ? Must not the character of a garden depend in great measure on the size and style of the house it adjoins, on the extent and character of the ground out of which it is to be made, on the trees and vegetation in its vicinity ?’

‘I should have thought so,’ I humbly pleaded. ‘Had I designed an absolutely formal garden where

this one now stands, I think I should have shown a complete insensibility to art as well as to nature. Lamia has just quoted from a gentleman who says that a garden should be separated from the adjacent country by a clear boundary-line, a good high wall for choice. Surely this is the narrowest and most pernicious dogmatism, that could have proceeded only from the mind of an architect whose motto is, "Nothing like bricks and mortar."

I paused, for I wanted the Poet to talk ; but he was good enough to say,

'Tell me, will you, what governed you in the laying-out of the Garden that you Love?'

'What governed me was what I found here : the house, its time-consecrated architecture, its immovable boundaries, the old oak, and not it only, but all the ineradicable old timber within sight, the park, and finally, when all these were allowed for, the general fitness of things. I am quite of opinion that a garden should look as though it belonged to the house, and the house as though it were conscious of and approved the garden. In passing from one to the other, one should experience no sense of discord, but the sensations produced by the one should be continued, with a delicate difference, by the other. Terraces

and balustrades, box edgings or yew hedges, anything obviously and intentionally formal, which is imperative in the case of certain stately dwelling-houses, would surely have been out of place here. Near to the house, the garden, you will have observed, is more formal and shapely, and you never, I trust, altogether lose vague evidences of design. But absolutely symmetrical it is not, though a careless observer might imagine it to be so; and it gradually assumes a less definite and disciplined air as it gets nearer to the tract of orchard, meadow, and park, to which it is sunnily open, and which it commands. Thus I have obtained, I think, a certain sense of spontaneous seclusion without wholly shutting myself in, or wholly shutting out everybody or everything else. Of course, there are nooks of perfect shelter, as Goldsmith said, for whispering lovers made; and the South Enclosure curves and winds as it chooses, as though there were no other curve or line in the world. Poet's Walk comes on you as a surprise; and, when you think you have seen everything, you suddenly discover the copse kitchen-garden, which, I confess, contains fully as many flowers as vegetables, and conducts to an orchard whose existence you had not surmised.'

I paused again, for I really was ashamed of having spoken so long and so inadequately. I could see Veronica thought it a very poor performance, and the critical expression faded from her face only as the Poet considerately came to my rescue.

‘If there be any association or analogy,’ he said, ‘between your art and mine, and I cannot but believe that all the arts are kindred, and that a strong family likeness exists among them, you are altogether right. I have read that volume, and find it exceedingly suggestive ; the answer to it, where I think it mistaken, being supplied by canons of literary composition. There are some gardens, like some poems, which, from the very nature of the case, must be absolutely formal unless they are to disappoint. The poetry of which Pope is the chief representative and the most consummate master, is absolutely formal, as becomes its subject, which is nearly always social, and the treatment of which is therefore stately and precise. I can scarcely conceive the *Essay on Man*, or the *Moral Essays*, being written in any other metre. Wordsworth, a poet of immeasurably higher and deeper imagination than Pope, elected to treat kindred subjects, as we all know to our sorrow, in a looser

and less formal fashion—in other words, in illimitable blank verse, in *The Excursion*. I should call that a glaring instance of infelicitous landscape gardening, though, of course, as must always be the case where Nature is left a more or less free hand, you come upon lovely bits and fascinating vistas. There are finer things in *The Excursion* than in the *Essay on Man*; but, taken as a whole, the first is tiresome, and the second is not. The design of *The Excursion* is a mistake, in so far as there is design at all. The design of the *Essay on Man* is appropriate, and the work, therefore, is successful.’

‘But surely you do not prefer Pope to Wordsworth?’ exclaimed Lamia.

‘Let us say as little as possible,’ he replied, ‘about our personal preferences, for they do not assist criticism, either on poems or on gardens. Chatsworth is Chatsworth, and a cottage is a cottage; and though I might be disposed to say “Give *me* the cottage”——’

‘Oh, but I should not,’ interrupted Lamia.

‘—that would scarcely settle the question. But remember it helps us to be tolerant in our tastes, and to see there is room in this world for idyllic gardens, for lyrical gardens, even for didactic

gardens, where, at every step, your mind seems to be improved, even if your heart be not touched. In Italy I have seen tragic gardens——’

‘And I,’ said Lamia, ‘have seen comic ones in England.’

‘Tragic gardens,’ continued the Poet, ‘with dark avenues of intertwined ilexes immeasurably old, where there might be lurking the emissary of an ambitious D’Este; gloomy labyrinths of mediæval yew concealing the panther-spring of a vindictive Sforza, or the self-handled stiletto of a fratricidal Borgia; broad, stately steps, and open-air staircases of cold-blooded marble, leading to sombre conclaves of silent cypresses, where Paolo Malatesta and the fair daughter of Guido da Polenta that day read no farther on, but dallied to their doom. Where these things have happened, why should not the garden be as tragic as *Othello* or as *Romeo and Juliet*? The idyllic garden would be out of place there, just as would-be dramatic gardens ill consort with peaceful England, and so fail to produce their proper effect.’

‘You spoke of lyrical gardens,’ said Lamia. ‘But may not lyrics be either regular or irregular?’

‘They may,’ he replied; ‘but it takes a consummate artist to compose an irregular lyric; and

that, I think, is why landscape gardeners have so often come to grief. In striving to be natural they have ended by being meaningless. Nature is a stupendous artist, but she conceals her design, and man is sorely puzzled when he tries to imitate her. Let him write his own works, and plan his own gardens. Man is designed to design ; and he cannot avoid endeavouring to reproduce, externally, the proportion and harmony which are the very essence of his own organism, and which permit of his existence. But I agree with our host that the best garden, like the best poem, is a formal one, in which, unless you give yourself some trouble to discover it, you will not perceive the form. Nothing living is absolutely symmetrical, and a garden should be alive.'

To the Poet's dictum there followed the silence of assent, which seemed, moreover, adequately filled by the moonlight filtered through the lime leaves. When at length there slowly supervened a craving for human speech, Lamia, who instinctively felt that discussion had lasted quite long enough, tenderly caressed Veronica's guitar, and satisfied our longing with the following strain:—

I

Had I a garden, it should lie
All smiling to the sun,
And after bird and butterfly
Children should romp and run ;
Filling their little laps with flowers,
The air with shout and song,
While golden-crests in guelder bowers
Rippled the whole day long.

II

Had I a garden, alleys green
Should lead where none would guess,
Save lovers, to exchange, unseen,
Shy whisper and caress.
For them the nightingale should sing
Long after it was June,
And they should kiss and deem it Spring,
Under the harvest moon.

III

Had I a garden, claustral yews
Should shut out railing wind,
That Poets might on sadness muse
With a majestic mind ;
With ear attuned and godlike gaze
Scan Heaven and fathom Hell,
Then through life's labyrinthine maze
Chant to us, ' All is well ! '

IV

Had I a garden, it should grow
 Shelter where feeble feet
 Might loiter long, or wander slow,
 And deem decadence sweet ;
 Pausing, might ponder on the past,
 Vague twilight in their eyes,
 Wane calmer, comelier, to the last,
 Then die, as Autumn dies.

‘How came you in possession of those lines?’
 asked the Poet, in a tone of manifest reproach.

“‘The wind bloweth where it listeth,’” replied
 Lamia, rising ; ‘I found them under your chamber
 window.’

I followed her into the open moonlight, leaving
 Veronica and the Poet seated by the lamp under
 the limes. As we neared the North Border, I
 recited from Dante—

*Qui vi è la rosa . . .
 . . . qui vi son li gigli,
 Al cui odor si prese il buon cammino.*

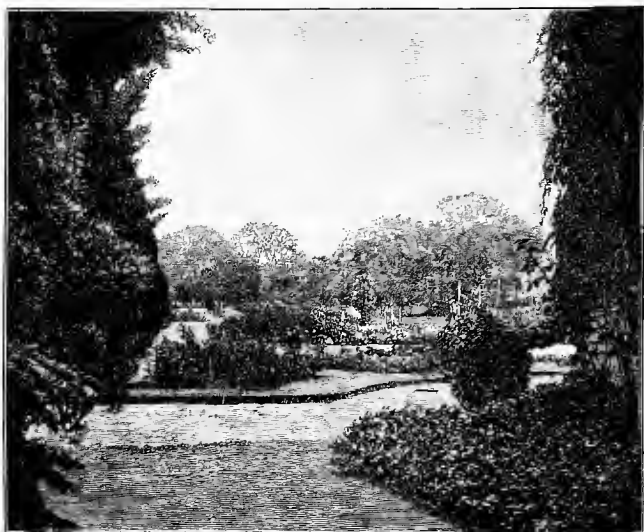
But Lamia, as if heeding me not, exclaimed—

‘Oh, how delicious is the scent of those pinks !
 Your garden has all the Poet says his should have,
 and more.’

‘And yet,’ I added, ‘it does not satisfy you.’

‘What does?’ she answered. ‘It is not always June, always moonlight, always fragrant, nor is one always just upon the edge of one’s desire. One is either remote from it, or one topples over. Yet I want that garden, the one I told you of—without the owner of it.’

‘Dear Lamia,’ I observed, ‘do you remember what Socrates said,—that the gods sell all things, at a price? So, apparently, do the goddesses. But some of them ask too much.’



THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE

31st August.

WHAT would it profit one to cultivate a garden, if one were not constantly reminded thereby to cultivate oneself, and were not aided by the one in the doing of the other? Partnership with Nature admonishes one to be continuously patient, to trust and hope, to have implicit faith in the capacity of time to work wonders, to put up with disappointments and disillusionings, and, after repeated failure,

cheerfully to try again. In a word, the right cultivation of a garden teaches one equanimity. Equanimity and Magnanimity conjoined—equanimity as regards oneself, magnanimity in respect of others—seem to me to sum up all the virtues. I have asked Lamia to make two devices over the doorway of my study. Over it, within, she is to inscribe the word *Equanimitas*; over it, on the outside, the word *Magnanimitas*. ‘Why in Latin?’ she asks; and it is not possible to make her understand the special savour there is in the vocabulary of a dead language acquired in one’s boyhood. But she is going to do as I wish.

I have often required all my equanimity,—and, be it confessed, have occasionally lost it,—in discovering mishaps in the Garden that I Love. Yet, as a rule, when Nature disappoints your expectations, it will turn out, on due inquiry, that you have not treated her fairly.

Therefore, suspect your own or somebody’s shortcomings rather than those of Nature, when the harvest of your expenditure falls short. Doing things in good time is the main secret of successful gardening, which I did not acquire till after sorrowful experience of the results of amiable procrastination. For want of observation of this simple fact

I have had more than one fit of depression, and have been taunted by Veronica with the superiority of some of the flowers in neighbouring gardens. Then it is that both equanimity and magnanimity are needed,—equanimity under Veronica's odious comparisons, magnanimity towards those who have outshone me.

I daresay you will think that loving a garden is, like every form of love, little better than slavery; and verily it is. But how one cherishes one's chains!

'Do you indeed?' asks Lamia. 'At any rate they give you a pretty long tether. Am I mistaken in thinking you spent February, March, and the better part of April, on the other side of the Alps?'

There it is. I did so, and I am paying for it now. My gardener is a pattern of conscientious docility and intelligent solicitude; but he is a gardener, and he is human. Upon the discriminating prevision of February, March, and April, depends the efflorescence of July, August, and September.

'And if,' continues Lamia, 'you will read Dante amid the ruins of the Baths of Caracalla, philosophically bestride a donkey on the slopes of Tusculum, or collect majolica ware for Veronica in

the purlieus of Gubbio, instead of staying at home like the honest Englishman you pretend to be, you must not let your equanimity be ruffled because your zinneas are this year not up to the mark, or because the new annual that was to do such wonders——'

'The *Kosmos*, you mean?'

'Yes :—is such an arrant failure.'

Yet what a thing is prestige! It pleased Veronica, last Saturday, to inflict on us a Garden-Party. Knowing how we abominate it, she began by cautiously observing that she had asked a couple of men to play lawn-tennis, in order to gratify me and the Poet. But these men have wives, or sisters; and if you ask men's wives or sisters, you must ask other men's wives, or sisters, or daughters to meet them; and then, in turn, other men have to be invited to meet all this gathering of sociable womenfolk.

'My dear fellow,' said the Poet, 'you might just as well be both equable and magnanimous, for we are in for it. Your sister, you may be quite sure, has asked the entire neighbourhood.'

'It is all very well for you,' I answered testily, 'to display equanimity, because you flirt,—all poets do,—and I do not. I shall have to take a succes-

sion of maiden aunts round the garden, as though it were a show, and I the showman.'

He was quite right. Veronica *had* asked the entire neighbourhood. There were so many rectors, and vicars, and curates, that you might have supposed yourself at Convocation, and sprightly spinsters so abounded that I felt my celibacy to be almost a species of crime. They clustered thickly round the oak, Veronica said, as though its respectable age was a sort of *chaperonage* for them; and superlatives of admiration were almost as plentiful as Veronica's cakes, peaches, iced-coffee-spoons, and I know not what. But I verily believe she had got all these people together in order that they might contemplate her Sheffield plated urns,—she has now got four of them,—and not in the least that we might have those lawn-tennis games she had professed to be benevolently projecting for us. The Poet and I did play all the same, and were reprov'd afterwards for our selfishness. But then, as the Poet pleaded, men *are* 'such selfish brutes'; though, in truth, I spent most of the time in listening to ejaculations of admiration over flowers that were far from reaching my own private standard. The Garden that I Love has somehow acquired a reputation in these parts; and so, I verily believe, most

of my neighbours would declare it to be a marvel and a show if it was covered with burdocks and darnels. Such, I say, is the force and value of prestige.

‘I am glad to see you are not elated,’ said Lamia,——

‘Nor misled,’ added Veronica.

‘—by the fulsome eulogiums passed upon your garden by all the young and old impostors whom you dragged from bed to border, and from South Enclosure to copse.’

‘Not in the least,’ I answered humbly ; ‘good is good, and bad is bad, and the garden to-day did not look as I should wish it to look.’

‘I am glad,’ said the Poet, ‘you remember the wise saying of Goethe, that he never accepted, from the public, commendation he had not already bestowed on himself, and that you act up to it.’

I don’t mind saying, now that I am no longer under the stress of these qualifying criticisms, that the garden looked perfectly lovely, and that the language contains no superlatives too good for it. Did not Veronica’s guests employ equally laudatory epithets concerning those absurd urns? If they were sincere in the one case, why not in the other? An agreeable person is not so much a person who

agrees with you, as one who makes you agreeable to yourself, by putting you in good-humour with yourself, encouraging your self-complacency, and leaving you with the impression that you are somebody after all. It was a most agreeable gathering.

As for Lamia, she behaved in a most exemplary manner—singing several exceedingly passionate love-songs, to the accompaniment of the guitar, to the maiden ladies, and throwing her whole soul into sentiments she did not feel in the very least. She is wonderful on these occasions, and would make any garden-party a success, even if there was not a flower in the place except herself. On one of our guests, it is true, she exercised her sprightly wit ; but I fancy he had been paying her commonplace compliments, and flattery has to be very original to please her. I heard him boasting that his pastures were the best in the neighbourhood, and that there was not a thistle on the ground.

‘Have you eaten them all?’ she asked.

But though I may seem as arrant a donkey as the one thus ingeniously reprovèd, I again ask, Did a garden ever look more beautiful?

In the first place, was there ever such a lawn? And even if there were, the lawn one stands on is, after all, the most important lawn in the world ;

and a greener, smoother, or more weedless one does not exist from Chiswick to Cashmere. The tennis-ground was such an example of level verdure that it seemed, at first, almost desecration to play on it ; and it was only after Lamia and I had won a couple of setts that one lost the sensation of sacrilege. As for the tea-roses, I think all Veronica's apparatus and flummery, the urns into the bargain, should have been called a Rose Tea, so completely did they entrance the beholder, though they have been flowering since the 1st of May, and to-day is the 31st of August. Women, no doubt, when they wish to please do not stick at a little mendacious flattery. But a clergyman of the Church of England, who is himself a rose-grower and a member of I know not how many Horticultural Societies, may surely be trusted to speak the truth ; and he declares, in the hearing of Veronica herself, that my tea-roses are, on the whole, the finest he has seen,—finer even than those in the garden of the professional grower who has laboured so bravely to make them popular. He is repairing the east window of his church. I think I must send him a subscription.

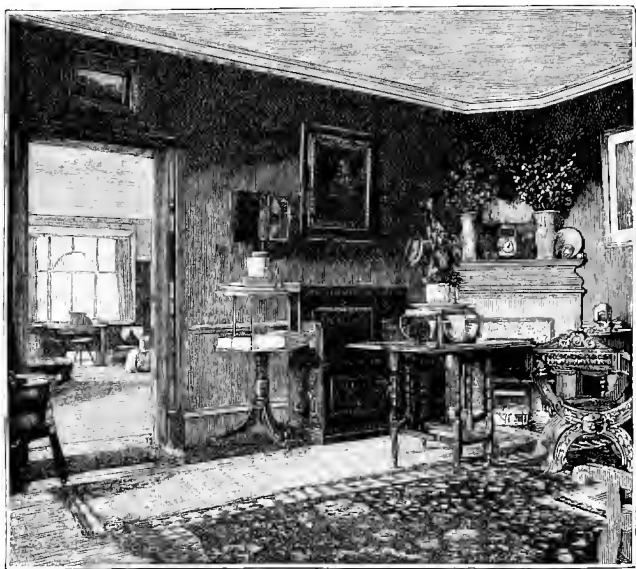
I have gone round again, by myself, and for the life of me I cannot understand how any one can

help falling into raptures. Lamia affects to belittle the spectacle in order to tease me ; and I believe Veronica thinks it necessary to 'take me down a peg,' lest I should become excessively enamoured of the work of my own hands. The *Harpalium Rigidum* or *Prairie Flower* has stems seven feet high, which branch into clusters of golden dials ; and though I confess it is a most aggressive plant, how is one to dispense with it, unless one substitute for it the giant perennial Sunflower, which, I dare-say, when one knows it better, will behave just as usurpingly ? The *Helianthus*, double and single, are a mass of bloom ; and the *Phloxes*, scarlet, salmon-coloured, and white, have done splendidly. The Japanese Anemones, both the white, the pink, and the red, are just beginning that delicate but profuse flowering they will prolong till they are chidden by an austere frost. Some of the golden-rayed lilies of Japan, the *Lilium auratum*, have shed their petals and their incense ; but others are still in all the pride of their Oriental beauty, especially among the tea-roses, where I took care to plant some of them. The Orange lilies are on the wane, after a short life and a merry one, and now the tall Tiger lilies—*Lilium tigrinum splendens*—are justifying their pretentious name. Many of

the clematis tribe, notably the white and paler-coloured ones, are breaking into bloom ; others are flowering a second time. The Cape Hyacinth—*Hyacinthus candicans*—bears its dainty white bells on long graceful stalks ; the Torch Lily is throwing up the stout, hollow racemes which will gradually taper into flame—some people call it the Flame Flower,—with which to light the dying year to its doom. The old-fashioned Hydrangea, which I dearly love, and which may be made, with the addition of iron to the soil, to bear blue trusses, is not a success in the Garden that I Love ; but *Hydrangea paniculata*, whose trusses are white, revels in bloom, and is just now a very joy to behold, whether blended with the beautifully discolouring leaves of the pæony, or mixed with the yet more heightened hues of the fading foliage of the azalea. The castor-oil plants—cod-liver-oil plants, as one dear simple creature spoke of them, when extolling my garden to a friend—have attained what in our non-tropical climate we regard as a colossal height, and are now in flower, as are all the *Cannæ*. The dwarf bronze-leaved castor-oil plants have grown taller than I wanted them to do, having been over-manured ; but I can see that, dexterously treated, they can be turned to several

ornamental purposes in combination with various shrubs and flowers.

But it is the annuals that now contribute the greater portion of the splendour, and all the scent,



that make the Garden that I Love at this moment a paradise of sensuous delights. Do you grow the sweet-smelling night-stock? If not, mind you do. It is a modest little plant, bearing an insignificant flower, something like *Venus's Looking-glass*, but as soon as the sunlight fades from lawn and flower-

bed, and the dew begins to rise from the ground, it saturates the air with an aroma you would think could proceed only from some strong and tall-growing plant, such as the *Nicotiana affinis* or white-flowering tobacco, whose habit it is to close its petals and go to sleep in the daytime, and to remain awake all night till well after the dawn. This tropical custom it has retained in northern latitudes. I plant this last anywhere and everywhere, but always under the windows of the house, so that its perfume agreeably assails you every time you pass. I think the South Enclosure, with its long curving avenue of almost every flower I grow, at this particular moment bears away the bell. For there one finds—

Moon-daisies tall, and tufts of crimson phlox,
And dainty white anemones that bear
An Eastern name and Eastern beauty wear ;
Lithe, haughty lilies, homely-smelling stocks,
And sunflowers green and gold, and gorgeous hollyhocks.

The South Enclosure is a veritable medley of growth and bloom, and I daresay a certain number of things are crushed out of existence, or seriously repressed, in the luxuriant struggle for primacy. But somewhere or other along it I come upon specimens of, I think, all the annuals that were

sown. *Gaillardia* and *Godetia* are particularly conspicuous in front, and are run pretty close by *Clarkia*. *Marvel of Peru*, which, of course, is not an annual, and Mallows of various hue, flourish amazingly a little farther back, even in the half-shade of permanent shrubs. *Sweet Sultan* is cheek-by-jowl with the *Helichrysum* or Everlasting; and as for the Violas—those persistent, untiring bloomers—where are they not? Snapdragons, white, yellow, and red, are much haunted by the sedulous bees, which sometimes experience no little difficulty, after once getting in, to persuade them to answer to the magic ‘Open *sesame*.’ What is there that grows more willingly, flowers longer, or displays greater variety of colour, than *Pentstemons*? and I have a small variety of them called *Chelone*, which is especially graceful. A sense of ancient peace abides amidst this republic of flowers; but the rose, the Rose, is Queen.

Over and above fostering equanimity, the cultivation of a garden promotes the tenderer graces and extends the sweet charities of life. I need no introduction to a person who has a garden; and, be his or her rank what it may, in I go, opening the gate, whether a huge iron or a humble wicket, with a proud confidence, certain to find a man and

a brother, or a woman and a sister. Love of gardening creates a safe freemasonry among those who cherish it. I stand on no ceremony, tender no excuse nor apology, proffer no introduction, but say at once, 'What magnificent honeysuckle!' or, 'Where do you get those splendid tuberous begonias?' and lo! we are friends at once.

I have made many a life-long friend by a bold intrusion and instant conference over a Pæony or a Michaelmas Daisy I had not seen before. I beg, borrow, and, I verily believe, if need were, would steal, a cutting of any beautiful plant that was a novelty. But petty larceny is unnecessary; for we who have Gardens that we Love willingly give of our superfluity. I like to think I have helped to beautify many a garden that, before, hardly deserved the epithet, and I am sure I have received far more than I have given; from cherished friends, one especially, whose garden, not above fourteen miles from Hyde Park Corner, is a very home of bounteous intelligence; from generous Head-gardeners, from kindly Rectors, from clergymen's wives with little plots of old-world flowers, handed down from generation to generation, and tended with a truly Christian love; from village blacksmiths, cottagers earning fourteen shillings a week, neighbours I see

frequently, strangers I never saw but once, when I got out of the saddle or Veronica's Baddlesden Car to go in and say, 'Will you give me a cutting of your Woodruff?' or, 'Can you spare me a piece of your Rosemary?' It is so pleasant to remember who it was that gave you your Holy Thistle, whom you petitioned for your *Statice* or Sea Lavender, and from what fair plot you brought the Blue Polyanthus you coddle so carefully, and with imperfect results. A flower-border thus becomes a living record and diary of your wanderings, your visits, your friendships, a perpetual reminiscence of the generosity of the rich, of the graciousness of the poor. When I read the debates on Parish Councils, and what some people say about the relations of squire, parson, and labourer, I fail to recognise the England that I know. I hope they will not legislate it out of existence, nor substitute for 'blue spires of cottage smoke 'mid woodlands green' what one sees too often in France,

Dismantled towers, mean plots without a tree,
A herd of hinds too equal to be free,
Greedy of others', jealous of their own,
Envy, and hate, and all uncharity.

How well the rustic children, themselves the sweetest of woodland wild-flowers, know who it is

that cares for the white water-lilies that grow in remote ponds and pools, and so bring them to Veronica, six in a basket woven of green and brown reeds, quite a work of art and taste, and say lispingly and with shy faces, when she asks them how much it is, 'Thickthpenth, pleath, mith!' Whereupon Veronica gives them a shilling and an orange apiece, or some bread and jam, and away they scamper, all their shyness gone as soon as they have turned the corner and are out of sight.

Shakespeare calls Spring 'the sweet of the year.' But I sometimes think the sweetest season of all is that when

. . . You scarce can say
If it be Summer still, or Autumn yet :
Rather it seems as if the twain have met,
And, Summer being loth to go away,
Autumn retains her hand, and begs of her to stay.

That is the season, just now—season of ripe fruits and quiet thoughts. Even Lamia cannot rouse nor fret me, and she has herself taken on something of the assenting aspect of the afternoon of the year. She follows me with all the quietness, and with more than the charm, of an Autumn shadow. Her speaking voice, always a contralto,

seems to have acquired a yet deeper, rounder, and mellower tone, from the cheerful gravity of the season. She gibes more rarely, and hesitates to scoff even at my foibles. When we went, yesterday, into the nearest hop-garden, she picked sedulously for ten minutes into the basket of a comely villager with five youngsters round her, liberated from attendance at school for a more profitable task, and then emptied her purse, which I allow was not very full, among the nighest workers. They all brushed her feet, and I thought them very privileged to do so.

I do not quite know how it is, but I observe that Veronica and the Poet seem to care for each other's company more than for ours, so that Lamia and I are left much together. She has, therefore, to accompany me in my garden rounds, and to make herself useful, which she appears more willing to do than formerly. She was always sweet; now she is serviceable as well. She carries the basket, when I make my daily scrutiny into the condition of the peaches, nectarines, plums, and pears, in the walled garden. As a rule, it is women who minister to the *gourmandise* of men; and Veronica invariably does her feminine best to promote masculine indigestion. But flowers and

fruit are among the finer gifts ; and so I gather the loveliest tea-roses on the wall for Lamia, while she bends fascinatingly forward, so that the juice of the luscious peach I have also plucked for her shall not fall on her clean bib and tucker. Of course, she gets her skirt caught in the accidental rose bushes, as she steps over the border with her basket, and forgets all about the fruit if she happens to espy an early violet. She makes a charming picture with the hollyhocks and the great sun-flowers.

‘Do you think,’ she asks, ‘men are not mature till, like pears, they are black at heart, or the pips, as you call them?’

‘Possibly,’ I answer ; ‘just as women, like peaches, soften as they ripen.’

‘You think I shall never be ripe? Oh, I have dirtied my frock! Lend me your handkerchief.’

Whereupon all the nectarines roll out of the basket, among the rank leaves of the seakale bed hard by, and we have such quiet pleasure in picking them up again. Those that are bruised we give to the housekeeper, to turn into jam ; and woe betide the credit of the Garden that I Love if it fail to furnish Veronica with an ample supply of material, in that form, for her store-room.

‘Do give me a pear,’ says Lamia plaintively, as though I ever refuse her anything! ‘No, not those. I want a *Conseiller de la Cour*, the best pear that grows, for it is, as the Poet says of love, both sweet and bitter.’

‘The wasps seem to be of the same opinion.’

‘They never sting *me*. Perhaps that is because I am only bitter,’ she answers, and proceeds with the pear, with absolute confidence in her immunity.

‘We are going to take their nests to-night.’

‘What fun! May I come? I saw a big one yesterday in the hedge-bank, in the lane going down to the bridge. Let us go and put a stick there, to mark it.’

The lane she speaks of leads to the river, and to an old mill beyond,—a mill centuries old, and still worked in ancient fashion, and with every obsolete device. Long may it stand upon its antique ways, and link one yet closer with the past. I know nothing quieter than the pool above it; and where a trembling little wooden bridge crosses the narrow end near the sluice, Lamia and I have more than once held discourse that dips into the inner life. To-day not a breath rippled the surface of the water, or stirred a leaf of the woodlands that girt it.

‘How charming!’ she exclaimed.

‘What is charm?’ I asked.

‘Charm,’ replied Lamia, ‘is mystery that is not wholly mysterious; the unknowable that is not altogether unknown. Sunshine, unqualified, untempered sunshine, does not charm, though it may delight; but sunshine-shadow does, and Autumn is the most charming of the seasons, because its shadows are the longest, the softest, and the most stationary. Charm withholds what it professes to reveal; and your garden is charming because it keeps back as much as it confers. Nature is charming, because, while seeming to hide nothing, she hides everything. Poetry charms, because it employs the real only to obtain credence for the ideal. Music is charming, because it touches the intangible. Who is it that says, “*Les choses qui arrivent nous touchent. Ce n’est que les choses qui n’arriveront jamais, qui nous fassent pleurer*”?’

‘I do not know,’ I answered, ‘but it is a true and a lovely saying.’

‘And so,’ continued Lamia, ‘it is only the things that are not that are charming. Charm is suggestion. Who are the charming people? The people whose manner is a frank reserve. It is as fatal to charm to seem to be concealing anything,

as it is to unveil everything. Charm is an open secret which no one knows.'

I cannot say that Lamia's serious paradoxes left me much wiser, but I confess I thought her frank reserve more charming than ever.

'Yes, you are right,' I said; 'and I am sorry for those people whom what is called Science has so familiarised with life, that life has lost for them its mystery, and, therefore, its charm. Charm, to add to your definition, is unsuspected illusion.'

'Illusion!' she sighed. 'If one could but *always* be illuded.

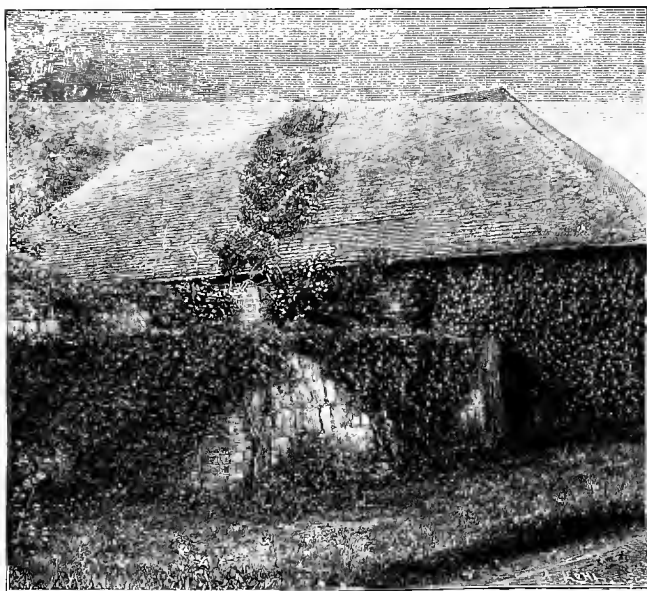
. . . It is well

To see all things in heavenly fantasy;
Ourselves, and others, even as we scan
The inaccessible bright stars and deem
Their silence music, so that nothing gross
Can reach the elevation of our thoughts,
Wherein we dwell transfigured.

But it is difficult to see a Garden-Party in heavenly fantasy.'

You would scarcely have thought we were the same persons that had held colloquy by the mill, had you seen us, at half-past nine that night, sallying forth to take the wasps' nests, or at any rate to see them taken by the old woodreeve, who prides himself, not without just cause, on being more

knowing, in most matters, than the unobservant and unhandy pupils of free education. A lantern, a tin can containing cowdung, a spade, and a pocket full of fuses, were his stock-in-trade. Lamia had been reading, at Veronica's suggestion, an account of a new way of killing wasps, by placing tow steeped in cyanide of potassium at the entrance



to their nests, and she could not help airing her new information. Her sciolism was treated with

much fine scorn by the unlettered expert : ‘ You see, miss, they don’t know nothing about it, and that’s why they writes in the papers. Them that knows doesn’t write ; they acts, miss, as I’m agoing to, now. Here’s a big ’un, and no mistake. Look out, miss! the’re some on ’em outside, crawling about the hole, and they might take a fancy to git up yer pettercuts.’

‘ What are the fuses made of?’ said Lamia.

‘ Brimstone and saltpetre, miss, with a little pinch o’ powder. But don’t you go buy fuses, or they’ll happen blow yer hand off, they’ve so much powder in them. I makes these myself. Now you see how they work.’

He lighted one of his fuses, which burned quietly and steadily, laid it, rammed it into the hole, and then daubed the aperture over with the contents of his can.

‘ But I don’t hear it explode,’ said Lamia.

‘ And you won’t, miss. And *they* won’t hear it, neither ; but it’ll quieten ’em, I reckon.’

‘ And are they all done for?’

‘ Them that’s grown up, yes ; but not the little ’uns that hasn’t yet come out. And whether you use fuses or that other stuff you spoke of, you must dig out the nest to-morrow, and swamp ’em

with water, and stamp all the life out of 'em, or you might just as well have stayed in bed.'

'How much better,' said Lamia, after we had bidden our companion and his lantern good-night, 'these peasant folk talk than we do, when they talk at all.'

'I am glad you have observed it,' I said; 'they are so much nearer to the fact, whereas, as a rule, we utter only the literary representation of the fact. After all, is Literature more than an excrescence on natural human speech?'

'A fungus, in fact. Let us go and communicate our discovery to the Poet.'

'Where are he and Veronica, I wonder?'

'Honeysuckling, no doubt,' said Lamia. There is a honeysuckle that rambles up an acacia-tree, under which Veronica and the Poet sometimes sit; and Lamia has coined a not inapt word to represent the state of mind they are supposed by her to be in.

As a fact, they were indoors, as we found when we ourselves entered. Lamia went straight to the piano; and I felt certain that, with her passion for sudden contrasts, and her impatience at the prolongation of any mood into which she might have been betrayed by surrounding circumstances, she

would now sing something grave and sad. I was not mistaken, for she at once began :—

Let the weary world go round !
What care I ?
Life's a surfeiting of sound ;
I would die.
It would be so sweet to lie
Under waving grasses,
Where a shadow fleeting by
Of a cloudlet in the sky
Sometimes passes.

Why, why remain ?
Graves are the sheltering wimples
Against life's rain ;
Graves are the sovran simples
Against life's pain ;
Graves are a mother's dimples,
When we complain.

O Death ! beautiful Death !
Why do they thee disfigure ?
To me thy touch, thy breath,
Hath nor alarm nor rigour.
Thee do I long await ;
I think thee very late ;
I pine much to be going :
Others have gone before ;
I hunger more and more
To know what they are knowing.

Weak heart, be thou content !
Accept thy banishment ;
Like other sorrows, life will end for thee :
Yet for a little while
Bear with this harsh exile,
And Death will soften, and will send for thee.

‘ When did you write that ? ’ I asked.

‘ Oh, long ago,’ said the Poet ; ‘ more under the influence of Rome, the Rome ruinous that then was, than from any personal feeling. It is rather elementary, not to say naïf, in expression, but it was sincere when written.’

‘ I am prepared,’ said Lamia, ‘ to defend its elementariness. I wish there were more elementary verses. Too many persons to-day write as though they had a Prize Poem in their head.’

‘ I fear you are right,’ he answered. ‘ It is fatal to a writer of verse to think, or even be aware, of an audience. As Mill said so admirably, Poetry should not be heard, but overheard. The self-consciousness of the stylist—forgive the employment of his designation of himself—is intolerable.’

‘ Does it not,’ asked Veronica, who was only, I felt quite sure, reproducing, with touching servility, one of the literary canons the Poet had, at some time or another, expounded to her, ‘ does not an

ever-present anxiety as to style indicate poverty of matter and shallowness of feeling?’

‘I should have thought so,’ he said. ‘If a man have the singing faculty, and have got anything to say, the matter will dictate the style. The moment one notices how a thing is being said, more than what is being said, one may be pretty sure either that little or nothing is being said, or is being said wrongly. A poet whose style is more noticeable than his thought or his sentiment resembles a man whose clothes you look at, rather than at himself.’

‘Or,’ suggested Veronica timidly, ‘whose accent you remark rather than his observations.’

‘But surely,’ said Lamia, who could not stand this amœbean style of criticism, ‘a poet must be aware of what he is doing when he writes a long tragic, epic, or idyllic poem, and must give himself some conscious concern as to how he is doing it.’

‘I presume so,’ said the Poet, ‘more especially in the conceiving or shaping of it, though I think he will act wisely to wait and allow the germ or embryo of it, when it first comes to him, to grow of itself, and naturally, within his mind, rather than force and artificially develop it. Growing by this method, a poem becomes an organism. Produced by the other, it is a mechanism. The latter may

be a most beautiful piece of work, but it simulates rather than possesses life. I suspect the schemes even of the greatest and the longest poems are, like the language and music of the best lyrics, fortuitous felicities.'

They were getting a little beyond my depth, so I quietly slipped out of the room, and therefore cannot say how the conversation ended. I might, however, just as well have remained, for I could not sleep, and was up and about in the garden the better part of an hour before sunrise. It is the most beautiful of all the twenty-four, and whenever I have the good fortune to awake about that time during the months when I occupy my summer bedroom, I always, like the youth to fortune and to fame unknown in Gray's poem, brush, though with no hasty feet, the dews away. So the dawn be clear, leaf and flower, under and above, are then delicately varnished with dew, even in the hottest and driest summer weather, not altogether unlike the moisture one sees sometimes on the face of sleeping children. In spring and early summer so many birds are singing at that hour, one would almost think there could scarcely be room in the air for all their notes. Just now, however, they are silent ; and therefore one notices the flowers all

the more. The evening primroses were lighting up the garden with their yellow cressets, and smelling, thus bedewed, just like new-made butter. Their Greek name of *Ænothéra* signifies a wine-trap, and is there not a certain roundabout appropriateness in the designation, since they certainly make a night of it, and refuse to go home till morning? Wandering round to the back, I found the black-caps fluttering about and feasting on the ripened seeds of the giant Kex, or New Zealand parsnips, that grow among the gooseberry-bushes, and they were so pleased with their occupation that they took no heed of me, though I stood within a couple of feet of them, watching their graceful but greedy antics as they fed or flew, head downward, about the seeded umbels. Now, there were no gooseberries to distract me, but I remembered how deliciously cold, indeed iced, they used to be at that hour in the month when they were ripe, and how the blackbirds, discriminating epicures that they are, would not look at any but the hairy red ones, the sweetest and most satisfactory of all. The Gloire-de-Dijon roses along the wire fencing were all bediamonded with dew, and I lingered among them till the sun rose, and the charm of the dawn was over. I daresay I had a presentiment that darker

days were coming. Perhaps we love the flowers most, as we do our friends, when they are on the point of leaving us.

23rd October.

THE first October frost has come, and the Garden that I Love presents a sadly altered aspect. Many of the flowers have turned black, going into mourning, I suppose, for the death of Summer ; nearly all of them are wilted, and hang heavy heads on sodden stalks. There are exceptions to the general havoc, but one hardly cares to notice or go in search of them when the bulk of their fair companions are fair no more. The tea-roses in the open beds, supposed to be so delicate, have taken but slight notice of the frost, and are the main survivors of the wreck. But there is a bite in the air which tells that, deceive oneself as one may under the influence of recurring genial days, Winter is on its way. Nature, however, always provides compensation for any destruction she may have to wreak ; and, if the flower-beds are piteous to look on, the shrubberies and copses have assumed a warmer glow, and the elms, sycamores, chestnuts, and beeches in the park, will soon glorify them-

selves exceedingly. For some distance in the lane outside the northern gate, a curious and singularly beautiful effect has been produced. On either side of it are a good many tall ash-trees; and the frost has stripped these, at one fell stroke, of all their sprays, while the leaves were still undiscoloured; so that the ground is covered deep, under other trees which have retained their foliage, with a soft green carpet. The apples in the orchard that are yet ungathered have taken from the frost, as the cheeks of children do, a ruddier glow; and the bushel baskets are round them, and the men, with their aprons turned back, are in the trees, gathering them. When they have all been plucked and stored, and the ladders and barrows been carried back to the shed, the last definite interest of the year is over. Lamia has a garden-basket in her hand, and in it she puts some of the rosiest apples, some stained leaves of the liquidamber, —no tree, not even the American sugar-maple, takes such dazzling colours,—and a sprinkling of jet-black fruit from the cut-leaved blackberry. We are all exceedingly pensive, and Lamia has not made merry over anything since yesterday. I can see what a weary time of ‘clearing the beds’ is before me, and I already sniff in imagination the smell of the bonfire that will have to be made in the pound.

It is a veritable pound, not merely so called, but one that belonged to the old manor, and there are neighbouring peasants not so very far gone in years who remember stray cattle being impounded in it. I maintain its old rough-stoned walls with reverent care, and plant wall-flowers, valerian, and poppies in its cracks. But I am sure it still wishes to be useful in these newer days ; so within it rubbish is shot for a time, rhubarb is grown, and polyanthuses, primroses, and such like things, are laid in, when taken up for the Summer. More perhaps than any other object, it links the place with the past, one's tenderness for which does not diminish as the days pass on. I suppose that, as we ourselves become a portion of the past, that sympathetic sentiment grows in us. How very absurd ! The years of all four of us, if added together, would scarce reckon a hundred. But, as I said, we have suddenly become pensive.

‘One can hardly,’ said Lamia, as we moved away from the stripped apple-trees, and walked across the open ground where once stood the old orchard,—‘one can hardly now distinguish what you added to the house from what you found there.’ We stood and gazed at it from near the oak, and I was obliged to agree with her.

‘Yes, it was not unskilfully done, and, when one is considerate, Time invariably helps one.’

‘Not always,’ answered Lamia, and I confess I have not a conception what she meant. I suppose the remark arose only from her artistic tendency to give shade to every assertion, and by qualifying each observation to confer on it tone and value.

‘I have never regretted the alterations we made,’ I resumed. ‘The house *was* too small, and the Martha-like mind of Veronica had not proper scope for its talents. Moreover, small it still remains. *Parva domus magna quies*, and we have had some few years of exquisite peace in it. I saw that inscription first on a house outside the *Porta del Popolo* in Rome, on the way to the *Ponte Molle*. I suppose it has disappeared by this time, like everything once quiet presided over by the Seven Hills. But I remember being asked to translate the words by ———, well, you may guess what sort of a person, when I tell you that he observed, in perfect good faith, that he thought small houses are always noisy.’

This was our nearest approach to merriment that morning; and I once again described, as though Lamia had never heard it before, how we had taken a slice off the old drawing-room and

thrown it into the passage, so as to make a little hall, had then added to the drawing-room at the other end, making it half as large again, had built new offices and a new bedroom, invented fresh lights, and done all this with a scrupulous respect and deference for what already existed. We seemed unable to get away from reminiscences.

We had walked through the meadow beyond the orchard, comparatively bare when I first saw it, but now boasting its avenue of limes, and so onward into the park.

‘The Garden that I Love may be mostly of my own making,’ I remarked, ‘but the house is the work of the hands and the mind of Veronica.’

‘I suppose so,’ said Lamia, who evidently did not regard the observation as very original, or as tending particularly to the development of valuable conversation.

We walked on over tangled tussocks and the split bristly husks of fallen horse-chestnuts, till we came to a stile in a right of way that emerges from a copse into the park. Lamia mounted the stile and sat on it, whilst I leaned against its adjoining posts. We had both gone silent. Now and then an acorn dropped. Now and then a cock pheasant repeated his somewhat harsh and self-asserting call.

A yaffel flew, in iridescent plumage, loudly screaming, from one tree to another. A squirrel, unaware of our presence, enabled us to compare his tawny tail with that of the yellowing bracken, as he hunted for beech-mast.

‘I have something to tell you, Lamia,’ I said.
‘Veronica and the Poet——’

‘Well, of course. But it is a pity. Poets should never marry. No one should ever marry, for that matter; but poets are peculiarly bad subject-matter for that hackneyed but perilous experiment.’

‘Why?’ I inquired.

‘Why! Don’t you remember?’

‘Nay, marry not a poet. He will have
As many changeling mistresses as moods.
He wantons with the February winds,
And toys with March’s forward daffodils.
He is an April fool each cuckoo-call
Can set agaping, and he falls in love
With every lamb that frisks its pretty tail.’

‘You forget the reply,’ I resumed. ‘How does it go?’

‘He may love all, so that he loves me too.
Who would monopolise a poet’s heart,
Large as the universe?’

‘Yes, but there is more,’ rejoined Lamia.

‘. . . May you never find
Its vastness cold. But, meanwhile, warm yourself.

Where are the interesting couple going to live?’

‘Here, of course. I could not let Veronica quit the home she has revived.’

‘And the Garden that you Love?’

‘I must make another.’

Off to another perch flew the yaffel, again laughing loudly, as if in woodland mockery of my specious fortitude.

‘But *I* also have news,’ said Lamia, ‘though of a less important character. I too am going to be——’

‘To whom?’ I asked.

‘To the Garden,’ she answered; ‘the Garden I told you I cannot go without.’

‘But the owner of the Garden?’

‘Oh, the owner? When he is tiresome I shall repeat to him the lines from the *Divina Commedia*—

‘*Perchè la faccia mia s’è innamorata,
Che tu non ti rivolgi al bel giardino?*’

‘But do you love him?’

She sprang from the stile with, I thought, a touch of impatience.

‘Love him!’ she exclaimed. ‘Don’t talk to me about love! Love is a literary invention.’



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"A nobly filial love of Country, and a tenderly passionate *love of the country*—these appear to me the two dominant notes of this volume. The phrases themselves stand for things widely different, but it seems fated that the things themselves should be found present together or together absent. . . . Our literature prior to Lord Tennyson contains no such full utterance of this dual passion, this enthusiasm of nationality underlying an intimate and affectionate knowledge of every bird that makes an English summer melodious, and every flower that sweetens English air; and it seems to me that if the question be asked, 'Who among the poets of a later generation can be said to share with Lord Tennyson the quality of being in this double sense English through and through?' any competent person trying to answer the question honestly will find the name of the author of this volume of *English Lyrics* the first to rise to his lips.

"Mr. Alfred Austin would seem to love England none the less, but rather the more, because he has also felt the spell of other countries with a keenness only possible in natures which present a wide surface to impressions. In *The Human Tragedy* he has projected himself by imaginative sympathy into the very life and spirit of the land

and
'Where Milan's spires go up to heaven like prayer,'

'Where once-proud Genoa sits beside the sea.

EXTRACT FROM THE PREFACE

But that very poem, full of Italian feeling and aglow with Italian colour as it is, opens with a chant of English springtime which is assuredly hard to match outside its author's own vernal verse. As pictures to hang up in one's mental gallery side by side with the exquisite 'spring' of *The Human Tragedy*, perhaps one would choose the autumn landscapes in *Love's Widowhood*, though some of these are harder to detach without loss or injury from their setting, being not so much examples of deliberate description as of that rarer art by which a poem is saturated with autumnal sentiment till the lines seem to rustle with fallen foliage, and their melody to come muffled through an indolent September haze.

"Mr. Alfred Austin may in a special sense be styled the laureate of the English seasons, for he seems equally happy whether he be championing our northern April against the onslaught of a critic who had fallen foul of that best-abused of months in an evening journal, or colouring his verse with the gravely gorgeous pigments of the time when nature seems sunk in reverie, and leaf by leaf the pageant of verdure crumbles down, or painting for us (*etching* would perhaps be the better word) the likeness of earth in that interval of apparent quiescence or suspended life, when her pinched and haggard features have put on an ascetic severity, and she seems to be doing penance alike for her summer revelries and the extravagant pomps of autumn,—when

'in the sculptured woodland's leafless aisles
The robin chants the vespers of the year.'

Thus it is that he seems among modern poets especially and saliently English, in the sense in which most of our best singers, from Chaucer onwards, have been English; a sense implying neither insularity nor prejudice nor any resistance of foreign impressions, but an out-of-door breeziness and freedom such as bring with them an almost physical consciousness of enlargement and space. None have imbibed more deeply than he the spirit of Italy, or surrendered themselves with franker gusto to the intoxication of southern air, yet when he comes back to these shores he comes back

'Blessing the brave bleak land where he was born,'

somewhat as a loiterer in courts and palaces might return with a newly-quicken'd affection to the hearth and rafters of an unforgotten rustic

EXTRACT FROM THE PREFACE

home. Whatsoever is worthily and nobly English is endeared to him by every early association and innate prepossession, but most of all the older and simpler modes of our national life, when still unmenaced with displacement by less comely and more mechanical conditions. The old-world charm and grace which yet ennoble the labours of tilth and husbandry; the kindly charities of rustic good-neighbourhood and human relations of cottage and farm and hall; the unique blending of stateliness and homeliness which makes the rural abodes of the gentle class in this country seem the most delectable of possible dwelling-places;—all these things are found mirrored in this poet's verse, not with any conventional idealisation, but with such simple faithfulness to the fact as is natural in one to whom the fact is as familiar as it is dear. And together with these things, but oftener felt as an implicit presence than overtly uttered, is the underlying sentiment of England's greatness on the historic and constitutional side, the enthusiasm for whatever is splendid and heroic in 'our rude island-story,' the chivalric passion of loyalty and allegiance which flames up in quick resentment if any affront be offered to the object of its devotion—as witness the noble sonnet 'To England,' written at the moment when the action of a great British minister, in despatching our Fleet to the Black Sea and calling out the Reserves, checked the advance of Russia upon Constantinople.

'Men deemed thee fallen, did they?'

he asks—

'Not wholly shorn of strength, but vainly strong,

and lapped in the luxury of a fool's paradise, because secure, in the last resort,

'Behind the impassable fences of the foam.'

But 'thou dost but stand erect,' he says, and the interloper falls back foiled, while 'the nations cluster round,' and above them

'Thou, 'mid thy sheaves in peaceful seasons stored,
Towerest supreme, victor without a blow,
Smilingly leaning on thy undrawn sword.'

"This is the language, and these the feelings, of a man who has not taken up patriotism as a theme whereon he can conveniently and

EXTRACT FROM THE PREFACE

effectively descant, but whose habitual mood is one of proud thankfulness in belonging to a country where, if anywhere, he may feel

‘The dignity of being alive.

“Wordsworth has told us how,

‘Among the many movements of his mind,

there were times at which he felt for England ‘as a lover or a child.’ It is as a lover that Mr. Austin habitually regards her, and if to a lover’s fervour he unites somewhat of a lover’s unconsciousness of any blemish in the worshipped face or form, such partiality is a thing we should be loth to exchange for any spirit of more coolly critical appraisal. Readers familiar with his whole contribution to poetry do not, however, need to be told that such emotion of heart in the presence of this ideal mistress is with him, as with Wordsworth, but one of ‘many movements’ which in their entirety represent a wide circuit of thought and feeling. In *The Human Tragedy* alone the complexity of elements is such as would have begotten in the work of an inferior artist an inevitable obscurity of design or incoherence of detail. Yet that poem assimilates easily into its narrative fabric such multifarious material as the collision of faith and reason; the conflict between human love and transcendental passion in a soul dedicated to heavenly uses but drawn aside for a time by an earthly emotion; the secret of the subtle spell exercised by Catholicism upon a pure and radiant human spirit which knows Doubt but as a shadow and Sin as a rumour; the immense, tragic irony of chance, as seen in the bewildered crossing and fortuitous overlapping of human lives, with all their momentous mutual interaction; the passionate abnegation or splendid immolation of self in the service of a great public cause; the heroic spectacle of a people that have long lain ‘pillowed on their past’ rising at the sudden summons of an idea to incarnate their dream of unity and freedom; the clash of theories, the dissonance of parties, the shock of hosts on the field;—such are some of the constituents of a poem, the monumental scale of which, and the variety of its component parts, are not more remarkable than the artistic fusion of so large a mass of material as its argument comprehends.”

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BY

ALFRED AUSTIN

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All of British blood,—
Whether they cling to Egbert's Throne,
Or, far beyond the Western flood,
Have reared a Sceptre of their own,

that should bring tender thoughts of the Motherland from many a far-off shore. I do not need to say more about the book. Whoever loves a garden will love it."

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Hear the home-music of your Kentish skies,
And dream that I am drenched with English dew.

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And every wildling bird and leaf
That gladdens English lanes.

His verse has the sincerity and spontaneity the talk of the friends sometimes lacks; and the note rings true that tells

I would live nestled near my kind,
Deep in a garden garth,
That they who loved my verse might find
A pathway to my hearth.

The beautiful old manor house and the garden are charmingly represented in the illustrations by A. Kohl and O. Lacour."

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